



# THE THAMES IN ART

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- **The Thames has been the trading heart of London, a source of entertainment, the location for ice fairs, and the cause of the Great Stink.** It has also, over many centuries, been the **inspiration for generations of artists.**
- There are thousands of paintings of the Thames and I have selected those that tell a historical story of the history of the river.
- Note that these notes include more slides than those shown in the video.

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Thames the most famous riuer of this lland, beginneth a little aboue a village called Winchcombe in Oxfordshire, and still increasing passeth first by the university of Oxford, and so with a maruelous quiet course to London, and thence breaketh into the French Ocean by maine tides, which twice in 24. howers space doth eb and slow, more then 60. miles in length, to the great commoditie of Trauellers, by which all kind of Marchandise bee easily conueyed to London, the principall store house, and Staple of all commodities within this Realme



John Stow, Survey of London, 1603 edition

Alfred Sisley (1839-1899), *Molesey Weir, Hampton Court*, 1874, 51.50 x 69.00 cm, Scottish National Gallery, presented by Sir Alexander Maitland in memory of his wife Rosalind 1960

- I will start with a description I found in a seventeenth century book written the year Elizabeth I died and James I became king.

**"Thames the most famous river of this island, begins a little above a village called Winchcombe in Oxfordshire and still increasing passes first by the university of Oxford, and so with marvellous quiet course to London, and thence breaks into the French Ocean by main tides, which twice in 24 hours space doth ebb and flow, more than 60 miles in length, to the great commodity of travellers, by which all kind of merchandise be easily conveyed to London, the principal store house, and staple of all commodities within this Realm"**

- This tells us a lot about the importance of the Thames and the reason for London's importance. The Thames enabled goods to be imported and exported to our major trading partners in Europe.

Ships could reach the point where the Thames could be crossed joining north and south and creating routes across the country.

- There are thousands of paintings of the Thames and I have selected those that tell a historical story of the history of the river...

## **REFERENCES**

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/survey-of-london-stow/1603/pp11-19>



Dagenham Idol, c. 2250 BCE, Valence House Museum, Dagenham

- The oldest artwork associated with the Thames, it is over 4,000 years old and was found 3 metres deep on the north bank of the Thames in Dagenham. At this time the Thames was much wider, had marshy land either side and flowed more slowly. The statue was buried with a deer and so may have been a religious offering.
- The marshes formed a natural barrier to travel but there was a seam of gravel near what is now London Bridge and this became the first ford which fixed the location of what became a Celtic centre which later expanded into Roman Londinium.

### **NOTES**

- The statue was found in marshland on the **north bank of the River Thames** to the east of London, south of Ripple Road in Dagenham, during excavation for sewer pipes in 1922, now on the site of Ford Dagenham. It was buried in a layer of peat about 3 metres (9.8 ft) below ground level, near the skeleton of a deer. The statue may have been buried with the deer as a votive fertility sacrifice

- It is over 4,000 years old (carbon dated to 2250 BCE, the early Bronze Age) and at this time the Thames had less water flowing but was wider with marshes and reed beds either side.
- It is about 18 inches high and has two legs but no arms. The hole in the pubic region indicates it was female although it is possible there was a phallic peg. It was found under three metres of peat near the skeleton of a deer so may have been a religious offering.

### **NOTES**

- The so called Venus of Willendorf is a figurine found in Lower Austria that is 25,000 to 30,000 years old.
- The Venus of Laussel is also carved from limestone and was found in France and believed to be between 18,000 and 20,000 years old, this Venus is a rare example of a prehistoric bas-relief.

### **REFERENCES**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dagenham\\_idol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dagenham_idol)



Gold medallion struck in Trier in AD 296 to commemorate the overthrow of Allectus, by the Roman general, Constantius Chlorus

- This is the only known picture of Roman Londinium. It celebrates the recapture of Britain from the self-proclaimed Emperor of Britain, Allectus by Constantius Chlorus, father of Constantine the Great. We know it's London because the letters LON appear below the kneeling figure which personifies London and is giving thanks to Constantius for not sacking the city. Legend has it the Constantius met his wife Helen in Britain.



Matthew Paris (c. 1200-1259), *Historia Anglorum*, 1250-59, page 2, British Library

- Let us start with one of the earliest pictures of London. In about **1250 Matthew Paris**, a Benedictine monk, map maker and author, wrote ***Historia Anglorum*** (*History of the English*) and in it he illustrated the complete journey from **London to Jerusalem**. The starting point, London, is bottom left and the journey goes up the map to **Rochester, Canterbury and then Dover** at the top left.
- Let us look at London more closely...

## NOTES

- Not a single sketch or painting of the city survives before this one, about 1250 (that's 1,200 years after the Romans founded Londinium). The only exceptions are tiny images of single Roman buildings, such as the one found on a coin of Constantius from the late third century.
- The first known city depictions come from two tomes by Matthew Paris: the *Historia Anglorum* and *Chronica Majora*. Both are forms of



map, showing pilgrims how to get from London to Jerusalem.

## **REFERENCES**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew\\_Paris](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Paris)

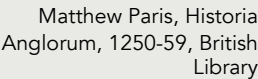
[https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal\\_ms\\_14\\_c\\_vii\\_f001v](https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal_ms_14_c_vii_f001v)



- Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum*, 1250-59, British Library,
- Unfortunately, we have almost no visual record for about two-thirds of London's history. Not a single sketch or painting of the city survives before about 1250 (that's 1,200 years after the Romans founded Londinium). The only exceptions are tiny images of single Roman buildings, such as the one found on a coin of Constantius from the late third century.
- The first known city depictions come from two tomes by Matthew Paris: the *Historia Anglorum* and *Chronica Majora*. Both are forms of map, showing pilgrims how to get from London to Jerusalem.

## REFERENCES

<https://londonist.com/london/art-and-photography/oldest-photograph-drawing-london>



- The text at the top is Anglo-Norman and reads: "La cite de lundres ki est chef de engleterre. Brutus ki premere enhabita ngleterre la funda e lapela troie la nuvele—**The city of London is the principle city of England. Brutus who was the first inhabitant of England, founded and named New Troy.**" The idea that London was founded by the Trojan Brutus is a legend first mentioned in the 9th-century but made most famous by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia Regum Britanniae* (The History of the Kings of Britain) written around 1136. Some pseudo histories trace his ancestry back to Noah and later British kings employed historians to show how they could (always) trace their lineage back to Brutus and therefore Noah and so back to Adam.
- Below this is written "le grat riue de tamise—**the great river Thames**".
- In the centre of the image of London is **Old St. Pauls** ('la iglise sie pol') which was still being built (built from 1087 to 1314 and

destroyed in the great Fire of London in 1666).

- The walls are the old Roman walls which were still standing although the crenellations were only added shortly before Paris sketched them here.
- Six city gates are named below the picture of London. **Ludgate, Neugate (Newgate), Crupelgate (Cripplegate), Bissopesgate (Bishopsgate), Bilingesgate (Billingsgate) and Alegate (Aldgate.)**
- The **first stone London Bridge had only been finished 50 years previously** and it can clearly be seen spanning the Thames ('punt'). City walls are shown mistakenly on the other side of the Thames. Although not shown the stone bridge had houses on it from the beginning including a chapel dedicated to St Thomas Becket (1119/20-1170).
- Other details (from left to right) include: la tur, the Tower; la punt, the bridge; trnite, i.e., la trinite, for Holy Trinity at Aldgate; across the river is shown lambeth, Lambeth; seit mara, Saint Martin's la Grande; and finally **Westm, Westminster.**" [1]
- Note that London was warmer at the time of Matthew Paris. **The Medieval Warm Period** was a time of warm climate in the North Atlantic region, not the world, that lasted from c. 950 to c. 1250 and Europe was on average one degree warmer. It was caused by an increase in solar radiation combined with a decrease in volcanic activity.

### **LONDON BRIDGE**

- It is believed that the Romans constructed a pontoon bridge over the Thames close to the current London Bridge in 43CE. This may have later been replaced by the Romans by a timber bridge. On the north, higher bank a small settlement grew into the town of Londinium. The location was ideal as it was the focus of roads from the south such as Watling Street (now the A2) and

to the north and it was also accessible from the sea and developed as a sea port and trading post.

- When the Romans left in the early 5th century the bridge fell into disrepair and the river became the boundary between Mercia and Wessex. The earliest reference to a Saxon bridge is in c. 1016 and following the Norman conquest in 1066 William I rebuilt the bridge. It was repaired, destroyed by fire and rebuilt over the centuries.
- The first stone bridge was commissioned in 1176 by the penitent Henry II with a chapel dedicated to Thomas Becket in the centre. The Chapel of St Thomas on the Bridge became the official start of pilgrimage to his Canterbury shrine. It was not finished until 1209. There were houses on the bridge from the start. The bridge was more like a weir with a six foot drop in water level either side. The restricted flow was one reason the Thames upstream more easily froze over than today.

## **REFERENCES**

<https://londonist.com/london/art-and-photography/oldest-photograph-drawing-london>

[1] <https://xefer.com/2013/10/london>





The Tower of London and the Thames from 'Poems of Charles, Duke of Orleans'  
c.1500, from the manuscript 'Royal 16 F.II, f.73' by British (English) School

- This is the earliest 'accurate depiction' of the Thames and the Tower of London.
- At the battle of Agincourt in 1415 the French knight Charles d'Orleans was captured and held in the Tower of London where he composed over 500 love poems. This book was produced some 85 years later and contains 166 of the poems.
- It illustrates the Tower of London with the White Tower and Traitor's Gate clearly visible.
- **The Medieval Warm Period was followed by the Little Ice Age from about 1300 to 1850 (caused by four massive volcanic eruptions in the tropics and the consequent changes in Arctic ice cover) when temperatures were about half a degree colder...**

## NOTES

- "Charles d'Orleans (d. 1465), cousin of the French king, was captured at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 and spent 25 years as a prisoner in England. During this time, he composed over 500 love poems and political verses in English and French, which were widely circulated during his lifetime. 166 of these texts are collected in this luxuriously illustrated volume, along with other works on the same themes.
- The manuscript includes an illustration of the Tower of London, where Charles spent many of his years in imprisonment. The White Tower and Traitors' Gate are clearly recognisable in the foreground of the panorama of London that precedes a French poem entitled 'Des Nouvelles d'Albyon' (News from Albion).
- This is the earliest known topographically accurate view of the city, depicted here as the centre of England's power and wealth. The Thames, busy with ships, flows past Custom's House, and London Bridge connects the city to the South." [1]

## **REFERENCES**

[1] <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/miniature-of-a-view-of-the-tower-of-london-with-london-bridge-from-charles-dorleans-poetry>



Abraham Hondius (c. 1625-1691), *The Frozen Thames, Looking Eastwards towards Old London Bridge*, 1677, 107.8 × 175.6 cm, Museum of London

Abraham Hondius (c. 1625-1691), *The Frozen Thames, Looking Eastwards towards Old London Bridge*, 1677, 107.8 × 175.6 cm, Museum of London

- This small temperature drop resulted in the Thames occasionally freezing over. The first **frost fair** was in **1608 and the last in 1814**. Here we are looking towards Old London Bridge and the church on the right is what is now **Southwark Cathedral** (originally St Mary Overie, 'over the river', renamed **St Saviour** by Henry VIII and Southwark Cathedral in 1905).
- It was painted by the Dutch artist **Abraham Hondius** who came to London when he was 41 and spent the rest of his life here. He painted a wide range of subjects including some landscapes like this one. We can see vast blocks of ice on the Thames with a line of people crossing the river. **Strangely, according to records** the Thames **did not freeze** the year he painted this. It had frozen **69 years before** but did not freeze again until six years after he painted it.
- It froze more often because **London Bridge stopped the water**



**flowing** and after Teddington Lock it is not tidal and so freezes more often, the **last great freeze was in 1962-3 (the Big Freeze of '63)** which I remember as I tried to go fishing at Hampton Court Bridge. It was completely frozen over although the ice was not thick enough to support a person's weight and I saw no one venturing onto the ice.

## **NOTES**

- "Hondius was born in Rotterdam and trained under Pieter de Bloot (1601–1658) and Cornelis Saftleven. He lived in Rotterdam until 1659 and moved then to Amsterdam. He moved to London in 1666, where he spent the rest of his life. Hondius combined throughout his career several stylistic influences and struggled to develop a style of his own. He however specialised somehow in animal pieces: more than two-thirds of his paintings, etchings and drawings are hunting scenes, animals fighting and animal studies. He also executed landscapes, genre and religious scenes." (Wikipedia)
- Strangely, according to records the Thames did not freeze in 1677. **It froze in 695 CE, 1608, 1683-4, 1715-6, 1739-40, 1789 and 1814.** From 1400 until the removal of the medieval London Bridge in 1835, there were **24 winters** in which the Thames was recorded to have frozen over at London.
- 1962-63 was one of the coldest winters for England since 1659 when records began. On 22 January a car was driven across the frozen Thames at Oxford but it did not freeze in central London.

## **REFERENCES**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham\\_Hondius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Hondius)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River\\_Thames\\_frost\\_fairs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Thames_frost_fairs)



Wenceslaus Hollar (1607–1677), *The Long View of London from Bankside*, 1647, etching, British Museum



Wenceslaus Hollar (1607–1677), *The Long View of London from Bankside*, 1647, etching, six plates, British Museum

- Another view of the Thames and London from the tower on Southwark Cathedral, then St Saviour, on the south bank.
- Wenceslaus Hollar made this 2.7 metre long print from six plates. (CLICK) This detail shows The Globe Theatre where Shakespeare had been performed until 1642 when they were banned until 1660.
- You can see another theatre where bear baiting takes place although this was also banned by the Puritans. It returned in 1660 but the practice had largely died out by the 18th century.

## **NOTES**

- This is a long view of London from the south of the river. Hollar made drawing of London in the 1640s and produced this composite print from six plates when he returned to Antwerp in 1647. He made the drawings from the tower of Southwark Cathedral (then called St. Saviour in Southwark) and left England in 1644 to escape the Civil War.

- The total print is about 2.7 metres (nine feet) long (CLICK) and this close up shows the south bank of the Thames. The south bank was outside many of the rules and regulations of the City and it was where entertainment took place such as bear bating and the Globe theatre.
- It was also the haunt of prostitution. From the 12th to 17th century Southwark was controlled by the Bishop of Winchester. Among other powers, he had the right to license and tax the borough's prostitutes and they became known as the 'Winchester Geese'. To be 'bitten by a Winchester goose' meant to contract the pox, now called syphilis, and 'goose bumps' was slang for the symptoms of the disease.
- One version of this composite print sold at Christie's in 1999 for £46,600.

## **REFERENCES**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long\\_View\\_of\\_London\\_from\\_Bankside](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_View_of_London_from_Bankside)

<https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-1626429>

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/805316/london-the-long-view>

<https://historytheinterestingbits.com/tag/winchester-geese/>  
(prostitution in Southwark)



Dutch School, *The Great Fire of London*, c. 1675, 89.7 × 151.6 cm, Museum of London

Dutch School, *The Great Fire of London*, c. 1675, 89.7 × 151.6 cm, Museum of London

- There are a few representations of the Great Fire of London, one by Jan Griffier the Elder, c. 1670-78. Most of the paintings are derivative and painted much later.
- This painting shows a view of the Great Fire as imagined between eight and nine o'clock on the evening of Tuesday 4 September 1666, from a boat near Tower Wharf. This painting is unusual in that it depicts the chaos and panic in great detail. The fire started in a bakery shortly after midnight on Sunday, 2 September, and spread rapidly. Tuesday 4 September was the day of the greatest destruction. The Duke of York was commanding the firefighters and hoped the Fleet would stop its progress but Tuesday morning it jumped the Fleet. Everyone thought St Paul was safe but on Tuesday Christopher Wren's scaffolding caught fire and the cathedral was quickly destroyed.
- Crowds of people can be seen, crammed onto the quayside, trying to save their belongings from the fire and loading them onto boats.

St Paul's Cathedral can be seen blazing on the horizon. Buildings to the left of the Tower of London are in ruins, having burned for two days already.

#### **REFERENCES**

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Fire\\_of\\_London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Fire_of_London)



Jan Griffier II (1688–1773), *The Thames during the Great Frost of 1739*, 47 x 65 cm, Guildhall Art Gallery, London

Jan Griffier II (1688–1773), *The Thames during the Great Frost of 1739*, 47 x 65 cm, Guildhall Art Gallery, London



Philip James de  
Louthembourg (1740–  
1812), *The Great Fire  
of London*, c.1797



Philip James de Loutherbourg (1740–1812), *The Great Fire of London*, c.1797, 60 × 81.3 cm, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

- This is a representation of the Great Fire of London but was painted 131 years later. It has become a well-known representation of the Great Fire of 1666.
- de Loutherbourg (1740-1812) was a French artist who studied in Paris before moving to London where he was paid £500 a year to design scenery and costumes for David Garrick.

### **NOTES**

- He is also known for his spectacular entertainment called the Eidophusikon (pronounced 'ido-foos-econ'), meaning "image of nature". This was a miniature mechanical theatre of moving parts and changing coloured lights. It was thought up by David Garrick and created by de Loutherbourg and was six by eight feet. It presented scenes from nature, mythology and the Bible to an audience of about 150 people. The scenes included sunrises and

sunsets, moonlight images, storms, shipwrecks and volcanoes from all over the world with sound and music effects. It was an exciting new technology that people flocked to see. It was the first time moving images had been shown in a theatre and it made de Loutherbourg famous.

- One famous scene was *London Viewed from Greenwich Hospital* which had a "molten red sunset" but this was exceeded as an invocation of the sublime by this picture, *The Great Fire of London* as seen through the arches of London Bridge. Four years later Turner painted *London* covered in a thick cloud of smoke, prophetic of the great fire that enveloped the Parliament in 1834.

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<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-great-fire-of-london-245404>

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-london-from-greenwich-park-n00483>



Jan Siberechts (1627-c.1700),  
*Landscape with Rainbow, Henley-on-Thames*, c.1690, 81.9 × 102.9 cm, Tate



Jan Siberechts (1627-c.1700), *Landscape with Rainbow, Henley-on-Thames*, c.1690, 81.9 × 102.9 cm, Tate

- We must remember that **landscape painting** of the British countryside **did not become popular until the nineteenth century** with Turner and Constable. Prior to this most landscapes were mythological or Biblical scenes.
- There were two **exceptions, the first was pictures of country estates** and Jan Siberechts (pronounced 'siber-echt) specialised in this type of painting when he settled in England in the 1670s. The country house and estate portrait, of which Siberechts was the most accomplished practitioner, was a fashionable genre in Britain by the late seventeenth century.
- This is not a country estate. Siberechts has painted one of the **earliest landscapes in the Tate collection**. It is Henley-on-Thames but the perspective is distorted and the view embellished although it has recognisable features such as the church on the right (St Mary the Virgin). The river in the foreground and the high hills are not accurate and some argue it is not Henley at all but Nottinghamshire

or Derbyshire.

- **The other exception was views of London and the Thames by Canaletto and others in the eighteenth century.**

### **NOTES**

- "One of the most important early landscapes in the Tate's collection, this view of Henley-on-Thames is one of several the artist made of the subject, the last dated picture being painted in 1698. Such realistic representations of landscape were not prevalent among British artists, and Siberechts's skilful use of light and shadow and meticulous attention to detail reflect his Flemish background. His depiction is not entirely accurate - the view is embellished and the perspective distorted - but it has an appearance of realism and shows recognisable features. The church on the right of the picture still stands."
- "Sir Thomas Willoughby, 1st Baron Middleton, commissioned from Siberechts prospects of Wollaton Hall in Nottinghamshire. Over a number of years, he also commissioned from the artist a series of views of various places in England, including a view looking towards Henley-on-Thames, dated 1692. It is not known if Lord Middleton commissioned this picture as well, or if it was painted with a different audience in mind. Its contemplative nature sets it apart from typical commissioned work."

### **REFERENCES**

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/siberechts-landscape-with-rainbow-henley-on-thames-t00899>



55 cm, Guildhall Art Gallery, London

Jan Griffier II (1688–1773), *The Thames during the Great Frost of 1739*, 47 x 65 cm, Guildhall Art Gallery, London



Canaletto (1697-1768), *London: The Thames from Somerset House Terrace towards the City*, c.1750-51, 107.9 x 188 cm, Royal Collection

Canaletto (1697-1768), *London: The Thames from Somerset House Terrace towards the City*, c.1750-51, 107.9 x 188 cm, Royal Collection

- We are now in the eighteenth century when landscape was beginning to become popular.
- This is by Canaletto, the son of the painter Bernado Canal, hence the name Canaletto or 'little Canal'. He was a leading Venetian painter who specialised in city views including Venice, Rome and London. He started out painting views of Venice for British aristocrats on the Grand Tour. In the 1740s the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) resulted in his clients cancelling their tour of Europe. So he decided to come to them if they would not come to him. He arrived in London in 1746 and stayed ten years.
- This view is from the terrace of old Somerset House and in the distance is the dome of New St. Pauls completed some 40 years previously.
- We can also see the spires of the many churches designed by Christopher Wren following the Great Fire. On the right just left of Old London Bridge we can see the Monument to the fire. This is one

of the last pictures of Old London Bridge which was demolished six years later.

### **NOTES**

- He lived in London from 1746 to 1756. He was highly successful in England, thanks to the British merchant and connoisseur Joseph "Consul" Smith, whose large collection of Canaletto's works was sold to King George III in 1762.
- The view is taken from the Terrace of Old Somerset House. Its New Gallery facing the river had been built in 1661-61 for Henrietta Maria, the Queen Mother and was perhaps designed by Inigo Jones. The building was subsequently the home of the Royal Academy, and part of it is now occupied by the Courtauld Institute of Art.
- In the distance we see St Paul's Cathedral, completed in 1709. Canaletto slightly altered the dome to make it more imposing. We see the steeples of churches around it built by Christopher Wren following the Great Fire of London. On the right to the left of London Bridge is the Monument to the fire erected in 1671-77. Old London Bridge with its houses was demolished a few years after this was painted in 1757.
- It was a companion to this work...

### **REFERENCES**

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/400504/london-the-thames-from-somerset-house-terrace-towards-the-city>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canaletto>





Canaletto (1697-1768), *London: The Thames from Somerset House Terrace towards Westminster*, c.1750-51, 107.6 x 187.9 cm, Royal Collection

Canaletto (1697-1768), *London: The Thames from Somerset House Terrace towards Westminster*, c.1750-51, 107.6 x 187.9 cm, Royal Collection

- Which looks in the opposite direction towards Westminster.
- Immediately beyond the terrace is the wooden tower of York Buildings Waterworks, built after 1675 and demolished in 1829, and to its left the Banqueting House designed by Inigo Jones.
- The skyline is dominated by Westminster Abbey and the four towers of St John's, Smith Square. **Westminster Bridge had just been completed in 1748**, and links to the timber yards visible on the south bank.
- The present Westminster Abbey was started by Henry III in 1245 although a church is meant to have stood on the site since the seventh century. The abbey's **two western towers were built between 1722 and 1745 by Nicholas Hawksmoor**, constructed from Portland stone to an early example of a Gothic Revival design.
- When the two views are placed side by side they create a long

panoramic view of the curve of the river...

### **NOTES**

- The Banqueting House has a low-pitched roof that cannot be seen from ground level. It was originally made from brown, grey and white stone. It was designed by Inigo Jones (1573-1652) and started in 1619 and finished in January 1623, a remarkably quick time. In fact the first masque, Masque of the Augurs, was held on Twelfth Night 1622.

### **REFERENCES**

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/400506/london-the-thames-from-somerset-house-terrace-towards-westminster>



The two can be viewed as a single wide-angle scene which was the way in which many topographical views of London were presented, usually from a much higher imaginary viewing point.



Canaletto (1697–1768),  
*Westminster Bridge, with the  
Lord Mayor's Procession on the  
Thames*, 1747, 95.9 × 127.6 cm,  
Yale Center for British Art



Canaletto (1697–1768), *Westminster Bridge, with the Lord Mayor's Procession on the Thames*, 1747, 95.9 × 127.6 cm, Yale Center for British Art

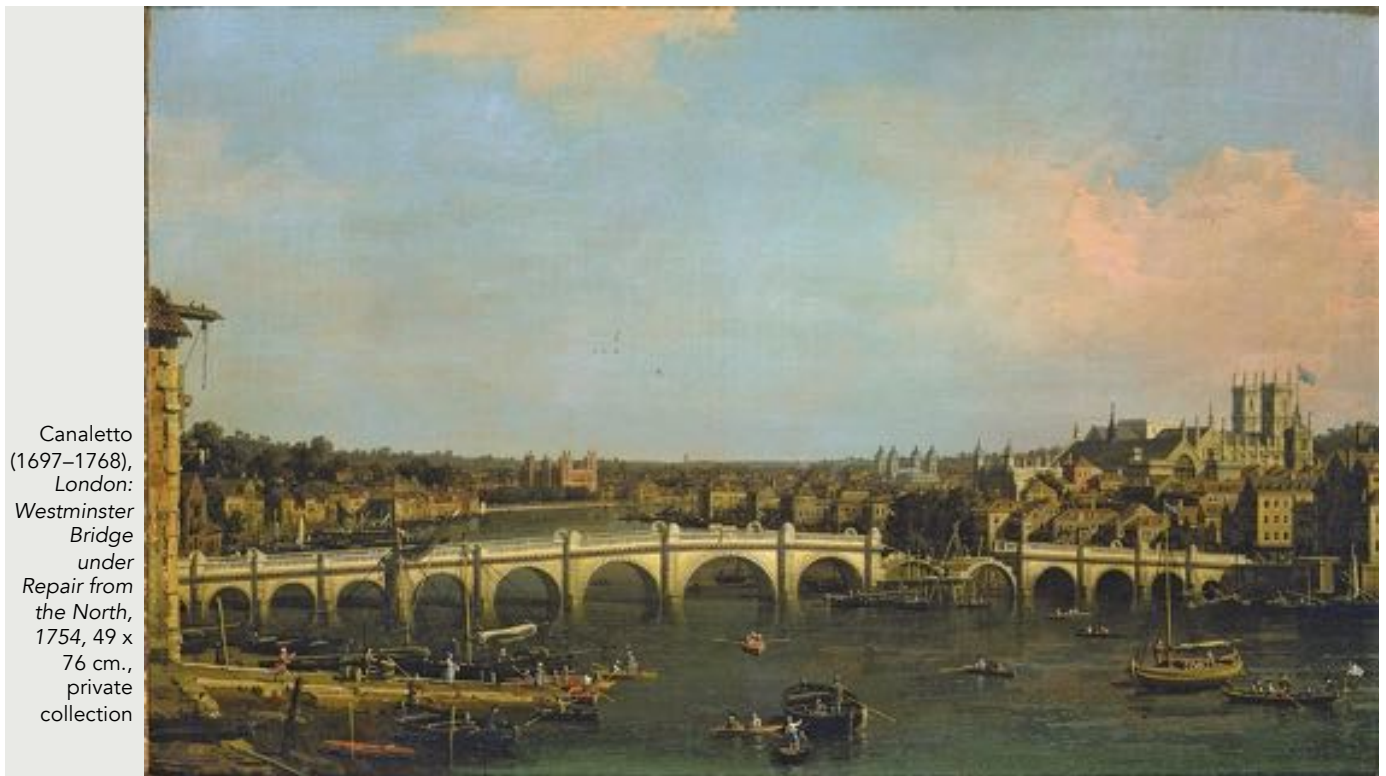
- It took six years to build and was **first opened on 25 October 1746** but a year later one of the piers was found to be subsiding and two of the piers had to be dismantled and rebuilt before it was reopened on 17 November 1750.
- Here we see the initial opening with a procession on the Thames with the Lord Mayor's barge in the foreground.
- Note the **recesses over each pier**. Each alcove was designed for a nightwatchman to shelter in during bad weather but there was concern that "**robbers and cut-throats**" could use them to ambush passers-by.
- The **Palace of Westminster** on the right is a **ramshackle collection** of houses and halls. The large building is **Westminster Hall with St Stephens Chapel in front** of it used as the House of Commons from 1547. Westminster Hall is the oldest existing part of the Palace and dates from the reign of William I's successor, **King William II (r.**

**1087–1100).** Westminster Hall is where Elizabeth II lay in state from 14th to 19th September.

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Canaletto  
(1697–1768),  
London:  
Westminster  
Bridge  
under  
Repair from  
the North,  
1754, 49 x  
76 cm.,  
private  
collection

Canaletto (1697–1768), *London: Westminster Bridge under Repair from the North*, 1754, 49 x 76 cm., private collection

- **Westminster Bridge was the second bridge to be built over the tidal Thames.**
- On the right is Westminster Abbey, so we are on the south bank looking north west. To its left is a building with four square towers known as Queen Anne's footstool. It is St. John's Smith Square which was a church designed by Thomas Archer and completed in 1728. It is said that when Archer asked Queen Anne what she wanted she kicked over her footstool and said, 'Like that!'.
- The building left of centre is Lambeth Palace the official London residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury which was acquired by the church in about 1200. The land was not rapidly developed as it was marshland like the opposite north bank where Tate Britain now stands.

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[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%27Westminster Bridge  
%27 by Canaletto, oil on canvas.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%27Westminster_Bridge%27_by_Canaletto,_oil_on_canvas.jpg)

Samuel Scott (c. 1702-1772), *An Arch of Westminster Bridge*, c. 1750, 135.7 x 163.8 cm, Tate



Samuel Scott (c. 1702-1772), *An Arch of Westminster Bridge*, c. 1750, 135.7 x 163.8 cm, Tate

- Scott may have been inspired by Canaletto and his popular views of London. Scott, like Canaletto, shows lively figures shown here swimming, drinking ale and peeping through the balustrade.
- Scott made many sketches during the construction and assembled his paintings from various time periods during construction. A painting by Canaletto painted further back makes it clear Scott must have stood on a pier and these are the second and third arches from the Westminster side.
- This is the second arch (on the left), through it we see Fishmarket Wharf, Montagu House and the houses of Mr Joshua Smith, the Duke of Portland, Mr Andrew Stone, the Countess of Portland and the Earl of Pembroke, and the York Buildings Water Tower; and, under the third (right) arch the Savoy Palace This was originally built 1263, extended by John of Gaunt and burnt in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, Henry VII built a hospital in 1512 which was dissolved in 1702 and it was used as a military prison. Behind it is St Mary-le-

Strand and we can glimpse Old Somerset House and its gardens where Canaletto stood on the terrace to paint the previous paintings.

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Joseph Mallord William Turner  
(1775-1851), *Moonlight, a Study  
at Millbank*, exhibited 1797,  
31.4 × 40.3 cm, Tate



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *Moonlight, a Study at Millbank*, exhibited 1797, 31.4 × 40.3 cm, Tate

- We have now reached the age of Turner. This is *Moonlight, a Study at Millbank*, 1797, painted when he was 22.
- Further upstream from Westminster Bridge is Lambeth Palace. The land around it was marshy and opposite was **marshland known as Millbank**. Before the embankment was built the Thames spread out into marshy land north and south of the river. Samuel Pepys referred to the plague pits in this area which was suitable for shooting snipe.
- After Cromwell's victory at the Battle of Worcester in September 1651, some 4,000 defeated Royalists were imprisoned at Tothill Fields prior to being **sold as slaves** to merchants trading with Africa and the West Indies. Facilities at the prison camp on the marshy ground were so poor that 1,200 prisoners were recorded as having died in the primitive conditions.
- Prior to the development of **Millbank Prison in 1816**, the area was sparsely covered with residential houses, but did feature a distillery by the river owned by a Mr. Hodge and numerous small almshouses,

bridewells and pest houses for the poor, criminally inclined and sick. Millbank Prison was closed in 1890 and the **National Gallery of British Art** (now Tate Britain) built on the site.

- "Turner painted this work of the Thames at night from a position near that of Tate Britain. It dates from the year after Turner showed his first oil painting at the Royal Academy, also a marine night painting (or nocturne). It was **fashionable to show moonlight effects** in pictures at this time. They were mostly based on Dutch 17th-century painters like Aert van der Neer, then popular with British collectors. Unlike those highly stylised paintings, here the impression is naturalistic." (Tate website)
- It is possible that this is Turner's first exhibited oil painting. Conventionally, this is thought to be *Fishermen at Sea* (1796) but it could be this painting.

## **NOTES**

- Millbank is so called because there was once a mill there but by Samuel Pepys time it was called Tothill Fields.
- Jeremy Bentham purchased the Millbank site from the Marquess of Salisbury for £12,000 to build one of his panopticon prisons. This was never built and the design was hexagonal. As it was built on marshy land there were numerous problems with subsidence and it was finally built on a concrete raft, the first use of concrete since the Roman Empire.

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- <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-moonlight-a-study-at-millbank-n00459>
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Canaletto (1697–1768), *The Grand Walk, Vauxhall Gardens, London*, c.1751, 51 x 76 cm, Compton Verney



Canaletto (1697–1768), *The Grand Walk, Vauxhall Gardens, London*, c.1751, 51 x 76 cm, Compton Verney

- Moving upstream again to Vauxhall we find the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens as painted by Canaletto. They went down to the Thames roughly where Vauxhall Station is now situated. This was painted halfway through his ten-year visit to England.
- Vauxhall Gardens was one of the **most fashionable venues** for public entertainment in London for two hundred years (1659-1859). Located in Kennington on the south bank of the River Thames it first opened **before 1660** and was mentioned by Samuel Pepys. It was then known as **New Spring Gardens** and reopened as Vauxhall Gardens in 1785 and became a popular venue for all forms of entertainments including musical performances, such as **George Frederick Handel's 'Music for the Royal Fireworks'** in 1749, which attracted an **audience of over 12,000**. It was known as a place for **romantic assignations as well as tightrope walkers, hot-air balloon ascents and firework displays**.

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- <http://www.fovpg.com/historicalgardens>



Thomas Girtin (1775-1802, died aged 27), *The White House at Chelsea*, 1800, watercolour, Tate Britain

Thomas Girtin (1775-1802, died aged 27), *The White House at Chelsea*, 1800, watercolour, Tate Britain

- Upstream again from Vauxhall to **Chelsea** which at the time was a **farming** area outside London.
- Thomas Girtin's *The White House at Chelsea* is a topographical landscape. This painting was produced in the first year of the century and many regard it as **one of the great landscapes of the century**. As we have seen landscape painting was established in the 18th century but became an important subject in the 19th century.
- This painting accurately represents a particular stretch of the Thames. One reason such accurate topographical paintings were produced was to enable engravings to be made for the rapidly growing market for **travel guides** and the market for travel guides for Britain was fuelled by the fact **we were at war** and no one could travel abroad.
- In 1800 we were in the middle of the wars with France. This meant that the Grand Tour of Europe was suspended and there was an increased interest in **visiting sublime and picturesque sites in**

**Britain.** This idyllic scene gives no hint of the conflict abroad and it inspires patriotic feelings through invoking a mood. It is not just an accurate representation of a scene - it does something few earlier landscapes attempted which was to **invoke a mood, of stillness, a reflective mood of lost time** as the light slowly fades and the beauty of England.

## NOTES

- Thomas Girtin is little known today but an anecdote involving Turner shows us how just how well he was regarded.
  - A dealer went to Turner's house and after looking through his drawings, had the audacity to say, 'I have a drawing out there in my hackney coach, finer than any of yours.' Turner bit his lip, looked first angry, then meditative. At length he broke silence: 'Then I tell you what it is. You have got Tom Girtin's *White House at Chelsea*'.
- Turner knew Girtin well as they were the same age and students together. Unfortunately Girtin died aged only 27. He died painting variously reported as asthma or 'ossification of the heart'. Turner said after his death in 1802, 'Poor Tom.....If Tom Girtin had lived, I should have starved'.
- On the right is Battersea Old Bridge and we are looking upstream across the Thames towards Battersea. The windmill known as the Red House Mill belonged to Joseph Freeman and the white house is where Battersea Park is today (opened 1858, **formerly marshland popular for duelling, and growing lavender and 'Battersea Bunches' of asparagus**). On the other side of the river is **Chelsea Old Church** which was destroyed in the Second World War (1941).
- One of the most interesting buildings is to the right of the Mill. I thought at first it might be the pagoda in Kew but that is further away. I then thought it was All Saints Church in Fulham as that

had a similar structure on top in 1800.

- I now believe it is **Fowler's Mill, a horizontal windmill** (or vertical-axis windmill) **erected in Battersea in 1788** (until c. 1825) on the site of Bolingbroke House (pulled down in 1763 and owned by Henry St John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke, 1678-1751, pronounced 'bullingbrook'). It was **120 foot tall**, the tallest windmill in England (at Great Yarmouth there was one 102 foot tall) and a well known sight at Battersea. There were not many horizontal windmills in England, but there was another at Margate (Hooper's Mill), and it is thought they were invented independently from the horizontal windmills in the Middle East.

## **NOTES**

- All Saints Church, Fulham, "before 1845, as can be seen from many old paintings and prints, the tower was surmounted by a picturesque octagonal wooden spire enclosing the flagstaff and was popularly known as the 'pepper box'. This was eventually removed because it was considered to be 'incongruous'". This is unlikely as the church is two miles away but the structure seems nearer. It is not the pagoda at Kew although it was opened in 1761 (built by Sir William Chambers for George III) as it is in a slightly different direction and 7 miles away. Also, it is not Cremorne Gardens as they did not open until 1845-1877.
- Bolingbroke was a politician who took part in the Jacobite rebellion of 1715 to overthrow George I. He later returned and supported the monarchy. Died aged 73 and is buried in Battersea. He was a major influence on Voltaire and the founders of America such as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Benjamin Disraeli praised Bolingbroke as the 'founder of Modern Toryism'. Bolingbroke wrote that we are 'free not from the law, but by the law'.
- Fowler's Mill was an 80 foot structure on a 40 foot base with 96

sails inside and shutters that could be opened and closed.

### **NAPOLEONIC WARS**

The French Revolutionary Wars led to the Napoleonic Wars so historians call the wars from 1792 to 1814 the Great French War.

Austria was one of our allies in the First Coalition when the war started in 1793 but was defeated and signed the Treaty of Campo Formio in 1797 leaving Britain on its own. The Second Coalition was formed with Austria and others in 1798. France suffered from corruption but when Napoleon returned from Egypt he seized control in a coup in 1799 and then crossed the Alps and defeated the Austrians at Morengo in 1800 and then decisively at Hohenlinden leading to the Treaty of Lunéville in 1801 forcing Britain to sign the Treaty of Amiens in 25 March 1802. Britain formed a Third Coalition and declared war on 18 May 1803.

Napoleon had returned from his campaign in Egypt, seized control of the corrupt French Government and in 1800 led his army across the Alps and defeated our ally, the Austrians, at Marengo. This led two years later (1802) to the Peace of Amiens when for a short period artists could travel to the Continent.

### **THOMAS GIRTIN (1775-1802)**

Thomas Girtin's architectural and topographical sketches and drawings established his reputation and his use of watercolour for landscapes means he is credited with establishing watercolour as a reputable art form and creating the Romantic watercolour painting.

In 1800 Girtin married the daughter, Mary Ann Borrett, of a wealthy London goldsmith and moved to Hyde park next door to the painter Paul Sandby. In late 1801 to 1802 he spent five and a half months in Paris and in the spring and summer of 1802 he produced an enormous panorama of London called the 'Eidometropolis' (Greek for 'view of the mother city') which was 18



feet high and 108 feet long. That November he died while painting of either asthma or 'ossification of the heart'. His later bolder, spacious style had a lasting influence on English painting and the popular romantic and picturesque landscapes for which England became well known. The panorama was patented by Robert Barker (1739-1806) in 1787. He moved to the first purpose-built panorama building in Leicester Square in 1793 and made a fortune as people paid 3 shillings to enter. They could also buy prints. 126 panoramas were exhibited by Barker and others between 1793 and 1863. Their popularity declined in the 1860s although in America they experienced a revival. The experience was intensified in the 1840s by the moving panorama, a canvas that was scrolled past and the diorama invented by Louis Daguerre.

Turner was an introvert and often rude but Girtin was kind and considerate. As the pair of them went around together people tolerated Turner because of Girtin.

Among his followers were John Sell Cotman (1782-1842) and John Varley (1778-1842) and through Varley, David Cox (1782-1859). Cox was one of the greatest but least recognised British artists and member of the Birmingham School, a precursor of Impressionism (e.g. Cox, Rhyl Sands, c. 1854, Tate).

### **'THE BROTHERS'**

Girtin was apprenticed to a water-colourist called Edward Dayes who did not appreciate his talent and had him imprisoned as a refractory apprentice. Girtin became friends with Turner and exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1794, when he was 19 (Turner was 15). Within five years he had acquired influential patrons such as Sir George Beaumont who helped create the National Gallery and Girtin was the leading member of the Brothers (or the 'Girtin Sketching Club'), a sketching society of

professional artists. The Brothers used to meet at each of their houses in turn and in draw all evening based on a few lines of poetry that had been selected to produce historic landscapes. The host would keep all the sketches in exchange for providing everyone supper. Turner was an early member but thought his sketches were worth more than the cost of supper so he stopped attending.

### **WATERCOLOUR**

Watercolour is a transparent medium and there is no white watercolour. Watercolours are created by starting with the lightest colours and adding increasingly dark colours. Girtin played a key role in establishing watercolour as a reputable art form but in the early part of the nineteenth century it was regarded as a lesser art form compared with oil painting and watercolour paintings were referred to as drawings which had been 'stained' or 'tinted'. In 1804 a group of watercolour artists formed their own exhibiting society, the Society of Painters in Water-Colours. They were anxious that the 'novel' term 'painters' in watercolour 'might...be considered by the world of taste to savour of assumption'.

### **TOPOGRAPHICAL LANDSCAPE**

This is known as a topographical landscape, one that shows the land and often buildings accurately. The interest in topographical landscapes started by patrons wanting to show their country estate but was fuelled by the extraordinary growth in travel guides. The representation of travel locations evolved out of the need to bring reminders back from the Grand Tour of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (flourished 1660 to 1840). The Grand Tour was a rite of passage for wealthy young men and they often brought back paintings of the cities they visited, such as Canaletto's (1697-1768) Venice. The eighteenth century was associated with a rise in travel and the need for travel guides.

These guides described the landscape in terms of visual landscape conventions, such as bounding sidescreens and a receding foreground and the use of the term 'picturesque'. It was William Gilpin who first formalised the picturesque but it acquired a life of its own.

However, it is more than topographical. In 1852 *The Art Journal* claimed that Thomas Girtin was responsible for changing the merely topographical into an evocative composition. This painting, for example, does not just record a scene but creates an image that once seen cannot be forgotten.

### **BATTERSEA**

Battersea is mentioned in Anglo-Saxon time as Badrices īeg = "Badric's Island" and later "Patrisey". As with many former Thames island settlements, Battersea was reclaimed by draining marshland and building culverts for streams. The settlement appears in the Domesday Book as Patricesy.

The first Battersea Bridge was built on the bend of the river and was the last Thames London bridge made of wood. It opened in 1771 and was a danger to shipping and there were frequent collisions, so the two central piers were removed and reinforced with steel girders.

"Fifty yards west of which Caesar crossed the Thames with the Britons scattering before him".

"The [Horizontal] Mill at Battersea on the spot where [Henry] Bolingbroke [statesman and philosopher, friend of Pope] was born and died."

The first Chelsea Bridge did not open until 1857 and was called Victoria Bridge but it was found to be structurally unsound and so was renamed Chelsea Bridge to avoid Royal Family associations with any collapse.

### **HENRY EDRIDGE PORTRAIT**

Sold at Sotheby's in 2011 for £20,000. Watercolour with touches of gum Arabic on ivory, oval: 3 x 2 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches; 72 x 62 mm, the glazed reverse revealing a lock of Girtin's hair, painted c.1796. Now owned by the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

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Francesco Zuccarelli (1702–1788), *A view of the River Thames from Richmond Hill*, c. 1750, 80 x 122.6 cm., Dickinson Gallery, London and New York



Francesco Zuccarelli (1702–1788), *A view of the River Thames from Richmond Hill*, c. 1750, 80 x 122.6 cm., Dickinson Gallery, London and New York

- Further out of London we pass the limit of the tidal flow and come to Richmond Hill, a location from which many artists painted and sketched. The **passion for landscape paintings** developed during the middle of the eighteenth century and many Italian artists travelled to England to exploit the opportunity.
- Zuccarelli made two trips, the longest for 10 years (from 1752 to 1762) which overlapped with Canaletto (from 1746 to 1755).  
**Zuccarelli was in high demand** and received commissions from George III and from the aristocracy. He did not rely on patronage but produced many works he **sold on the open market**. He typically painted idealised, imaginary Arcadian landscapes but this is a rare topological view.
- The picture is idealised as there were not the proliferation of large houses below the Hill.

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\\_A view of the River Thames from Richmond Hill.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zuccarelli_-_A_view_of_the_River_Thames_from_Richmond_Hill.jpg)





Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *England: Richmond Hill, on the Prince Regent's Birthday*, exhibited 1819, 180 × 334.6 cm, Tate

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *England: Richmond Hill, on the Prince Regent's Birthday*, exhibited 1819, 180 × 334.6 cm, Tate

- A similar view inspired Turner although this painting was produced to celebrate the Prince Regent's Birthday and to try to obtain royal patronage.
- "This painting depicts a London view, looking across Richmond Hill towards Twickenham. The Examiner newspaper described it at the time as 'a pictorial display of the magnificence of England'. The painting was Turner's attempt to attract the patronage of the Prince Regent, the future King George IV. The prince was an increasingly unpopular figure, due to his extravagant lifestyle and his poor treatment of his wife, Caroline. Turner failed to get royal support, and his picture was seen as a bit pretentious. Looked at in the context of the political upheaval of 1819, Turner's idyllic landscape could be accused of being strikingly out of touch." [1]
- This was a turning point (no pun intended) in his art. Maybe he decided he didn't need royal patronage or any patronage. From this point on he increasingly painted what he wanted to paint and

moved from a classical style in the manner of Claude to what we call today an impressionistic style.

## **REFERENCES**

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J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851),  
*The Burning of the Houses of  
Lords and Commons, 16th  
October, 1834, 1834 or 1835,*  
92 × 123.1 cm, Philadelphia  
Museum of Art



J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), *The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons, 16th October, 1834, 1834 or 1835*, 92 × 123.1 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art

- Turner was excited by the visual opportunities offered by the burning of the Houses of Parliament and painted sketches and two finished oil paintings. He hired a boatman to take him as close to the blaze as possible while he made sketches.
- Look at the size of the crowds that have come to watch. You may wonder what they are thinking. Benjamin Robert Haydon wrote, '**The feeling among the people was extraordinary—jokes and radicalism universal.**' (Radicalism—a belief in complete political or social reform). **Many thought the fire was arson** and the banks of the Thames were **packed with spectators cheering and clapping** the burning building.

### NOTES

- Many saw this as divine retribution for the passing of the Reform Act

of 1832 and the fortuitous destruction of the poor architecture of some extension buildings by others. The House of Lords had recently been rebuilt in a mixture of neo-Classical by Sir John Soane and neo-Gothic by James Wyatt (1746-1813) and some saw the burning as God's displeasure with the resulting aesthetic mess.

- Among the spectators were Charles Barry (1795-1860) who realised a new building would be required and Augustus Pugin (1812-1852) who rejoiced at the opportunity to correct what he considered the terrible design mistakes that had been made in the recent renovation of the House of Lords combining Sir John Soane Neo-classical with James Wyatt's Neo-Gothic (in 1799)
- The distorted perspective of Westminster Bridge intensify the drama. The next day The Times wrote 'Shortly before 7 o'clock last night the inhabitants of Westminster, and of the districts on the opposite bank of the river, were thrown into the utmost confusion and alarm by the sudden breaking out of one of the most terrific conflagrations that has been witnessed for many years past....The Houses of the Lords and Commons and the adjacent buildings were on fire.'
- Some thought the fire was an arson attempt but it was caused by the excessive burning of 'tallies'. These are square hazelwood sticks notched to show amounts of tax paid or deposited and then split in half to record the transaction. The system went back to William the Conqueror. Two cartloads of tallies had accumulated and the Board of Works decided to burn them in stoves. The two workers assigned were overly enthusiastic and despite warnings from the housekeeper who told them that two tourists could not see the tapestries for the thick smoke, they continued to pile on the wood. They left at five o'clock and by six some oak panels had ignited. Within nine hours all the buildings except the Westminster Hall had been destroyed.

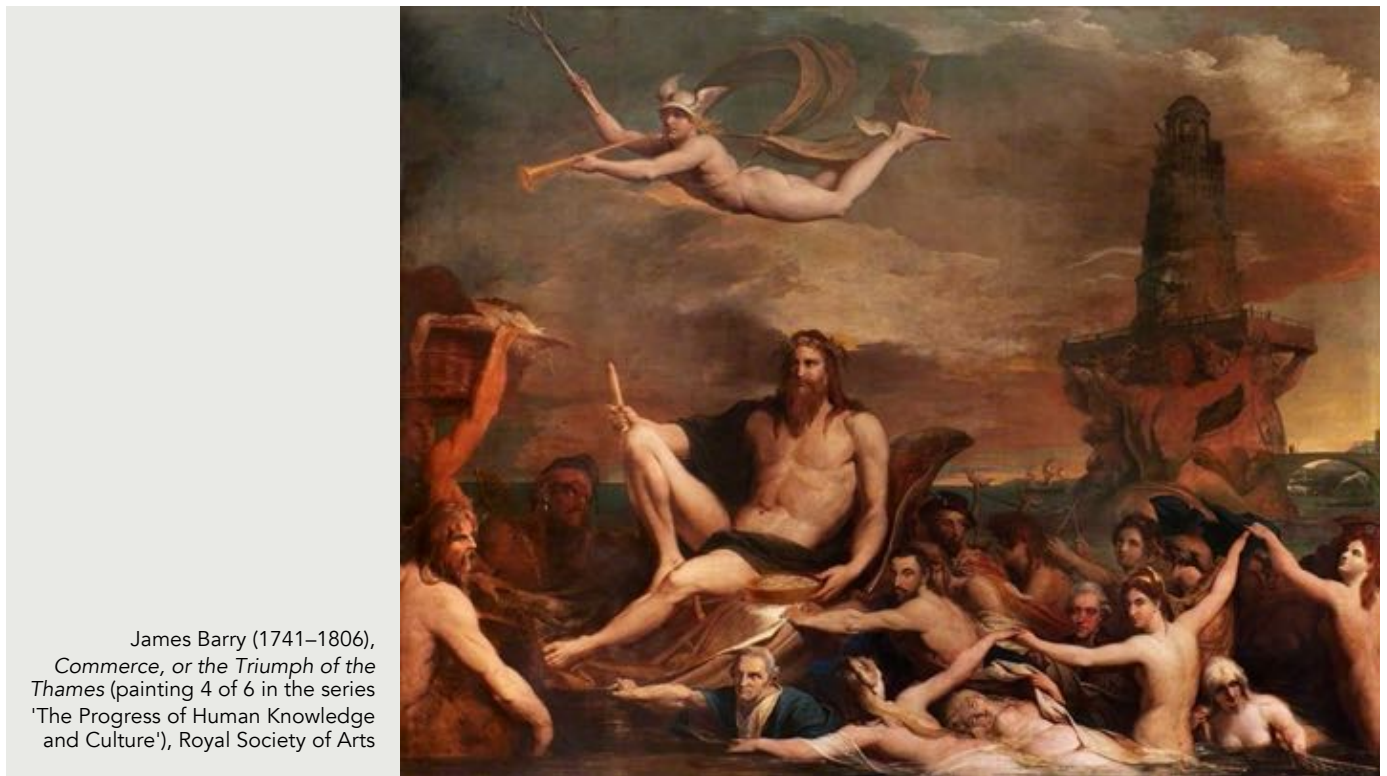
Some of the destroyed buildings dated back to Edward the Confessor.

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<https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/103831>

<https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1942.647> (another view)



James Barry (1741–1806), *Commerce, or the Triumph of the Thames* (painting 4 of 6 in the series 'The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture'), 1777-1801, 360 × 462 cm, Royal Society of Arts

- I return now to the centre of London which was becoming the trading centre of the world. The industrial revolution was changing everything. The Thames was packed with shipping bringing raw goods and taking finished goods around the world. The art critic Andrew Graham-Dixon described these works by Barry as Britain's 'late, great answer to the Sistine Chapel'.
- This work is the fourth in the series and depicts the Thames as a benevolent deity.
- Father Thames steers himself with one hand and holds a compass in the other. Above him the Roman god of trade, Mercury announces his coming. On the right are the navigators (right to left), Drake, Raleigh, Cabot and Captain Cook surrounded by sea-nymphs. To the left of Father Thames are figures representing Asia, Africa, Europe and America.



## **NOTES**

- He painted the six works for the Great Room of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce (now The Royal Society of Arts).
- James Barry was born in Cork and was a child prodigy who was trained in Cork and Dublin. He was spotted by Edmund Burke a wealthy Irish member of Parliament who persuaded his friends to sponsor Barry to travel round Europe studying the Renaissance old masters. On his return he painted mythological subjects which were well received. He then painted *Death of General Wolfe* showing the grim realities of war which resulted in severe criticism and led to his lifelong confrontation with the art establishment, particularly Joshua Reynolds. His painting of 'The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture' was well received but his attitude did not change resulting in him being the only Royal Academician to be expelled (until modern times). He was financially supported by friends and died in 1806 painting *The Birth of Pandora*.
- The surgeon James Barry (c. 1789-1865) was born Margaret Anne and was the niece of James Barry the artist. The surgeon rose to Inspector General in the army, the second highest medical officer and her biological sex was only discovered during the post-mortem.

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<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/barry-the-thames-or-the-triumph-of-navigation-t03785> (engraving)



John Constable (1776-1837), *The Opening of Waterloo Bridge ('Whitehall Stairs, June 18th, 1817')*, exhibited 1832, 130.8 × 218 cm, Tate

John Constable (1776-1837), *The Opening of Waterloo Bridge ('Whitehall Stairs, June 18th, 1817')*, exhibited 1832, 130.8 × 218 cm, Tate

- The picture shows the Prince Regent about to board the Royal barge at Whitehall stairs. The Lord Mayor's barge is situated in the right foreground with a billowing red standard. The painting commemorates the second anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo (18 June 1815). Towards the centre of the bridge a puff of smoke indicates the firing of a gun salute. The thick impasto paint with its animated surface creates a feeling of sparkling light and activity but it does make it difficult to photograph as we see here.
- Over seven feet in length, this is the **largest of Constable's exhibition canvases** and the result of **thirteen years** of planning. It commemorates the opening of Waterloo Bridge - and the second anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo - on 18 June 1817, an occasion celebrated with tremendous pomp and ceremony which Constable attempted to recapture in a whole series of drawings and oil sketches, dating from 1819 onwards.

- It is said that on seeing this work on varnishing day Turner added a bright red buoy to his own cool-toned painting to be able to compete with Constable's painting which hung beside his.

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. de St Croixin, Earliest photograph of Whitehall, 1839

M. de St Croix, Earliest photograph of Whitehall, 1839, daguerreotype, reversed to show the scene as it was

- This still familiar view of Whitehall is usually reckoned to be the **earliest surviving photograph of London**. It was taken by Frenchman Monsieur de St Croixin in **1839** using the technique pioneered by Louis Daguerre a few months before.
- It focuses on the **equestrian statue of Charles I**, which is considered the centre of London, from which all distances are measured. As such, it's a fitting subject for the earliest photographic image of London.
- **Ghostly forms of the people** who stayed still long enough to be captured on the image can just be seen to the right of the statue, and on carriages in the distance. These, then, are the first Londoners ever to be photographed. We will never know who they were.
- The original, which is flipped left/right as part of the Daguerrotype process, is held by the V&A.

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y Mr and Mrs S.G. Hall

Victor Prout, photograph of Richmond bridge, 1850s, *The Book of the Thames: From Its Rise to its Fall*, by Mr and Mrs S.G. Hall

- The earliest photographs of the Thames were a series of forty taken by Victor Prout in the 1850s. He used a makeshift darkroom on a boat and travelled down the Thames from Oxford to the Houses of Parliament.
- The photographs were published in *The Book of the Thames: From Its Rise to its Fall*, by Mr and Mrs S.G. Hall, a copy of which sold in 2022 for £30,000.
- This is Richmond Bridge which was built between 1774 and 1777 and still stands today. It was the eighth bridge to be built in London and is today the **oldest surviving bridge in London**. The bridge was built to replace the ferry which had existed since Norman times.

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John Leech (1817–1864), 'Father Thames Introducing His Offspring to the Fair City of London', (A Design for a Fresco in the New Houses of Parliament.), caricature published in *Punch* at the time of the "Great Stink".  
3 July 1858



John Leech (1817–1864), 'Father Thames Introducing His Offspring to the Fair City of London', (A Design for a Fresco in the New Houses of Parliament.), caricature published in *Punch* at the time of the "Great Stink". The River Thames introduces his children – diphtheria, scrofula and cholera – to the city of London, showing some understanding that the river was a danger to health. 3 July 1858

- What I haven't mentioned is that the **Thames was totally polluted, a dead river that stank in the summer**. Industries discharged their chemicals and many house discharged their raw sewage into the Thames.
- It all started in the 1830s when water closets became fashionable. Before then most houses had cess pits but the water closets drained directly into the Thames. In 1847 a bill was passed ordering all cess pits to close and sewage to be emptied into the Thames. As a result there was a cholera epidemic two years later in which over 14,000 Londoners died.
- In 1858 was known as the year of the 'Great Stink'. The smell was so bad that **Parliament could not sit** and as a result **a bill was passed**

**in August authorising £3 million** to be spent on Bazalgette's plan to build a sewer system for London. The sewers were started in 1859 and the Thames Embankment was under construction by 1865. The aim was to remove the smell as this was thought to spread disease, not the water as John Snow had shown some years before.

- In the 1860s there was a movement for cleanliness, physical health and self-improvement. This was a reaction to the appalling pollution shown here in the *Punch* cartoon of the Thames. The miasma theory was that disease was spread by bad air. **John Snow** (1813-1858) had only published his theory that cholera could be transmitted by water a few years earlier (1849) and it was not yet widely accepted.

## **NOTES**

- In July and August 1858 the smell of untreated human sewage and industrial effluent was so bad that the business of Parliament stopped. The leading article in *The Times* observed that 'Parliament was all but compelled to legislate upon the great London nuisance by the force of sheer stench'. It became known as the 'Great Stink' and by 2 August Parliament had passed a bill authorising £3 million to be spend on Bazalgette's plan to build a sewer system for London. The sewers were started in 1859 and the Thames Embankment was under construction by 1865.
- **Joseph Bazalgette** (1819-1891) was responsible for creating many parts of London as we know it today, the embankment, the sewage system, and he laid out many of the parks. He was born in Enfield, London and trained as an engineer specialising in land drainage and the railways. He married in 1845 and had eleven children. He was championed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel and appointed chief engineer at the Metropolitan Board of Works, in 1856. He therefore became the person responsible for designing

and constructing the new sewage system and embankment. He was knighted in 1875 and died in 1891 13 days before his 72nd birthday.

- **Samuel Smiles (1812-1904) published *Self-Help* in 1859.**

Smiles was a Scottish author and government reformer who campaigned on a Chartist platform but he concluded that more progress would come from new attitudes than from new laws. His masterpiece, *Self-Help* promoted thrift and claimed that poverty was caused largely by irresponsible habits, while also attacking materialism and laissez-faire government. It has been called 'the bible of mid-Victorian liberalism', and it raised Smiles to celebrity status almost overnight.

- In the 1850s **Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) developed the basic idea of Victorian Muscular Christianity** which was that participation in sport could contribute to the development of Christian morality, physical fitness, and "manly" character. It was seen as a 'counterbalance' to '... education and bookishness'. It was believed that the Anglican Church had become weakened by a culture of effeminacy. Kingsley supported the idea that godliness was compatible with manliness and viewed manliness as an 'antidote to the poison of effeminacy – the most insidious weapon of the Tractarians – which was sapping the vitality of the Anglican Church'. It was a response to the perceived puritanical and ascetic religiosity of the Tractarians, later known as the Oxford Movement. Aside from the religious motivations for the evolution and advancement of Muscular Christianity, the Victorians' preoccupation with health is arguably the most significant factor. 'No topic more occupied the Victorian mind than Health ... they invented, revived, or imported from abroad a multitude of athletic recreations'.
- The development of Muscular Christianity is linked with the combination of physical exercise, particularly the game of rugby,

and rote instruction in the Classics at the Rugby public boy's school under Rev. Dr. Thomas Arnold from the 1830s onwards. This was believed to develop a manly character and hard physical sports were regarded as an substitute for the unspoken and enervating 'sins' of masturbation and homosexuality.

- The link with applied art is cleanliness. Excessive ornament was thought to harbour dust and dirt and the movement for physical health was also for clean designs with excessive ornamentation.

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Walter Greaves (1846-1930), *Hammersmith Bridge on Boat-race Day*, c. 1862, 91.4 × 139.7 cm, Tate

Walter Greaves (1846-1930), *Hammersmith Bridge on Boat-race Day*, c. 1862, 91.4 × 139.7 cm, Tate

- In 1870 around **12,000 people** gathered on **Hammersmith Bridge for the boat race** and the authorities were concerned that it would not support the weight.
- This was painted by Walter Greaves, a Chelsea boat-builder and waterman whose father had taken J.M.W. Turner out on the Thames.
- **Walter Greaves met Whistler in 1863** and took him out on the river and later became his studio assistant and close friend for over twenty years. However, Whistler began to mix with more sophisticated group in the late 1870s and **Greaves was left out in the cold**. He suffered years of neglect until he was discovered by William Merchant and exhibited at Goupil Galleries in 1911. However, **Whistler's biographers Joseph and Elizabeth Pennel accused him of plagiarising** Whistler's work and this seriously damaged his reputation.
- In 1922 Augustus John, William Nicholson and William Rothenstein arranged for him to be exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery. Despite

the support of Walter Sickert he again **fell into obscurity and spent the last eight years of his life in a poor house.**

### **NOTES**

- Greaves claimed to have painted this naive picture when he was sixteen but he was unreliable about dates.
- The current bridge was designed by Joseph Bazalgette and was opened in 1887 and used the same piers as we see here.

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James McNeill Whistler (1834–1904),  
*The Thames in Ice*, 1860, 74.6 × 55.3  
cm, Freer Gallery of Art



James McNeill Whistler (1834–1904), *The Thames in Ice*, 1860, 74.6 × 55.3 cm, Freer Gallery of Art

- This was painted by Whistler in 1860. It shows a bitterly cold winter when the Thames froze for more than 14 weeks. I am showing it so you can see how much Whistler's style changed over the following 12 years.

## **NOTES**

- "After Whistler moved from Paris to London in 1859, he found the river Thames to be a constant source of inspiration. Originally titled "The Twenty-fifth of December 1860. On the Thames," this picture records a particular moment during a bitterly cold winter, when the river was frozen for more than fourteen weeks. Although he likely retouched the work later in the decade, Whistler claimed to have completed it in three days at an inn overlooking the river. The bold brushstrokes, somber palette, and thinly painted surface reinforce the realistic immediacy of the image. This work seems worlds away from the visual poetry of Whistler's later Nocturnes, but there is a

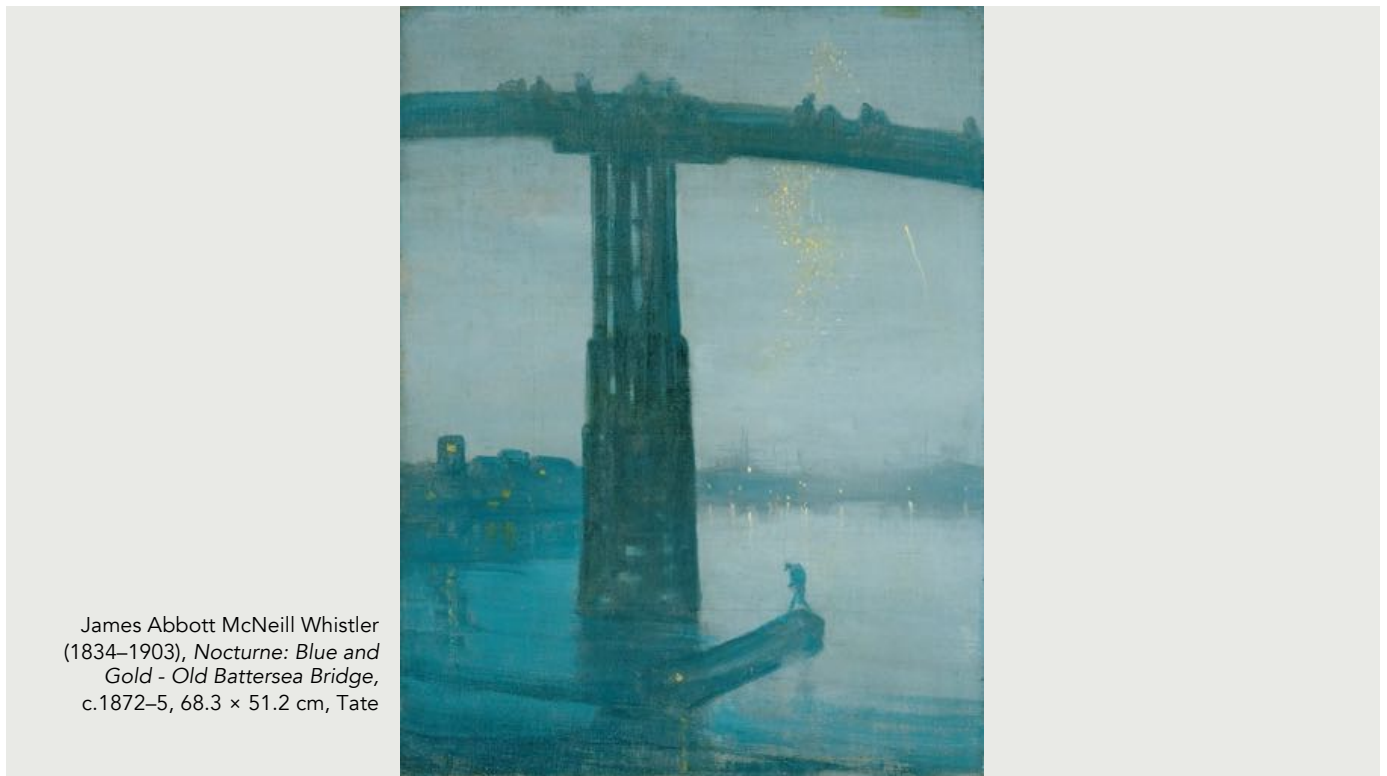


hint of his subsequent aestheticism in the misty gray atmosphere that envelops the factories on the far bank of the river.".

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<https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/index/article-index/whistler-and-battersea/article-category/article> (many paintings of theThames)



James Abbott McNeill Whistler  
(1834–1903), *Nocturne: Blue and  
Gold - Old Battersea Bridge*,  
c.1872–5, 68.3 × 51.2 cm, Tate

James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), *Nocturne: Blue and Gold - Old Battersea Bridge*, c.1872–5, 68.3 × 51.2 cm, Tate

- Whistler wrote:

*"...and when the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry, as with a veil, and the poor buildings lose themselves in the dim sky, and the tall chimneys become campanile, and the warehouses are palaces in the night, and the whole city hangs in the heavens, fairy-land is before us."*

James McNeil Whistler, *Ten O'Clock Lecture*, 1885

- This is one of his most controversial works and was brought in evidence in the famous Whistler-Ruskin trial in 1878.

## **REFERENCES**

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James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), *Nocturne in Black and Gold, The Falling Rocket*, c. 1872-77, 60.3 × 46.6 cm, Detroit Institute of Arts



James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), *Nocturne in Black and Gold, The Falling Rocket*, c. 1872-77, 60.3 × 46.6 cm, Detroit Institute of Arts

- This is *Nocturne in Black and Gold, The Falling Rocket*, painted at the same time and also displayed at the Grosvenor Gallery. This painting is now seen as a precursor to abstract painting.
- It gave rise to one of the central artistic controversy of the Victorian period, known as the Whistler v. Ruskin trial. The trial tells us a lot about how the Victorians regarded art and the nature of the changes Whistler helped bring about.
- It was exhibited in the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877, the year it opened and John Ruskin reviewed the work on display. He praised his friend Burne-Jones but savagely attacked Whistler, writing
  - **"For Mr. Whistler's own sake, no less than for the protection of the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay [founder of the Grosvenor Gallery] ought not to have admitted works into the gallery in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist so nearly approached the aspect of wilful imposture. I have**

**seen, and heard, much of Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face."**

- At the trial the judge had great trouble making out what this portrayed as it was expected that an artist should reproduce elements of reality accurately. In fact, accuracy of representation was regarded as one of the marks of a good artist along with imagination. Therefore, Ruskin's claim that he simply flung a pot of paint at the canvas was a serious criticism of his claim to be an artist.
- Whistler asked the jury not to consider it as a traditional painting, but as an artistic arrangement although he insisted that the painting was a representation of the fireworks from the Cremorne Gardens. In other words, in modern parlance, he was saying it was semi-abstract and should be evaluated on formal grounds, its balance, colour and composition.
- During the trial the opposing lawyer asked if it was a picture of Cremorne Gardens to which Whistler replied, **"If it were a view of Cremorne, it would certainly bring about nothing but disappointment on the part of the beholders"**. He did not wish it to be seen as simply a photographic representation. It did not help his case that at one point during the trial it was displayed upside down, like this. Of course, to modern eyes this is a technique that can be used with any painting to draw attention to its formal properties.

## **NOTES**

- Whistler arrived in Paris in 1855, aged 21, and moved to London in 1859 which he adopted as his home.
- In 1866 Whistler decided to travel to Valparaiso, Chile to fight the Spanish. Scholars have puzzle over his motivation. Whistler

stated he was asked by some South Americans as a 'West Point' man and he was very proud of his military training but, unlike his brother, he had never fought. He may have thought this the opportunity to display his military prowess as a swashbuckling Southern gentleman (even though he was born in New England). Whatever the reason Whistler's painted his first three night paintings while he was there. He later, thanks to the suggestion of his patron Frederick Leyland he re-titled them 'nocturnes'.

- On his return he contributed *Symphony in White, No. 3* but critics in England and France were not sympathetic and between 1868 and 1870 he showed only a single painting at the Royal Academy and none in France. He experimented with classical nudes in drapes but criticised himself for his lack of formal training in the life class. He had lost his sense of artistic direction. He was short of money, despised the English and began a major family crisis by arguing with his brother-in-law and pushing him through a plate glass window. In 1869 his half-brother George died.
- In 1871 he painted his ailing mother, *Arrangement on Grey and Black, No. 1* (colloquially called *Whistler's Mother*) and this to have been a turning point. At the same time he was rejecting Realism for Aestheticism and he chose to go out on the Thames at night with Walter Greaves (1846-1930) and paint his nocturnes. Greaves was a neighbour who was a boat builder and waterman and his father had been the boatman for J. M. W. Turner.
- Whistler painted several more nocturnes over the next ten years, many of the River Thames and of Cremorne Gardens, a pleasure park famous for its frequent fireworks displays, which presented a novel challenge to paint. In his maritime nocturnes, Whistler used paint he had thinned with copal, turpentine and linseed oil, creating what he called a 'sauce', which he applied in thin,

transparent layers, wiping it away until he was satisfied. To this ground he applied lightly flicked colour to suggest ships, lights, and shore line. Some of the Thames paintings also show compositional and thematic similarities with the Japanese prints of Hiroshige.

- Whistler was short and slim with a curling moustache and he often wore a monocle and dressed like a dandy. He was self-confident, arrogant and selfish and enjoyed shocking his friends. He had a biting wit and on one occasion, young Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) attended one of Whistler's dinners, and hearing his host make some brilliant remark, apparently said, "I wish I'd said that", to which Whistler riposted, "You will, Oscar, you will!" In fact, Wilde did repeat in public many witticisms created by Whistler.

### **THE WHISTLER V. RUSKIN TRIAL**

- This painting gave rise to one of the central artistic controversies of the Victorian period, known as the Whistler v. Ruskin trial. The trial tells us a lot about how the Victorians regarded art and the nature of the changes Whistler helped bring about.
- It was exhibited in the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877, the year it opened. John Ruskin reviewed Whistler's work in his publication *Fors Clavigera* on July 2, 1877. Ruskin praised Burne-Jones, while he attacked Whistler:
- For Mr. Whistler's own sake, no less than for the protection of the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay [founder of the Grosvenor Gallery] ought not to have admitted works into the gallery in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist so nearly approached the aspect of wilful imposture. I have seen, and heard, much of Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.

- Critics by convention did not criticise paintings as they knew the artist had to make a living. If they did not like a painting they ignored it or made a critical comment alongside some positive points.
- Whistler, seeing the attack in the newspaper, replied to his friend George Boughton, "It is the most debased style of criticism I have had thrown at me yet." He then went to his solicitor and drew up a writ for libel which was served to Ruskin. Whistler hoped to recover £1,000 plus the costs of the action. The case came to trial the following year after delays caused by Ruskin's bouts of mental illness, while Whistler's financial condition continued to deteriorate. It was heard at the Queen's Bench of the High Court on November 25 and 26 of 1878.
- Although, we do not have a transcript of the Whistler v. Ruskin trial sufficient reports were published to enable it to be reconstructed.
  - When asked about another painting, Nocturne: Blue and Gold—Old Battersea Bridge (1872-1875), 'Are those figures on the top of the bridge intended for people?'
  - Whistler replied 'They are just what you like.'
- When the judge asked if it was a barge beneath the bridge,
  - Whistler replied 'Yes, I am very much flattered at your seeing that. The picture is simply a representation of moonlight. My whole scheme was only to bring about a certain harmony of colour.'
- Whistler stressed the colour rather than a harmony of form and the form is suppressed by the overall similarity in tone and hue; with the exception of the gold dots the painting is a wash of blue, in places a thin wash that allows the canvas to show. Whistler mixed large quantities of the predominant tone that he called his 'sauce', and although he started on an easel, he often



had to throw the canvas on the floor to stop the sauce running off. The sky and water were rendered by 'great sweeps of the brush of exactly the right tone.'

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James Tissot (1836-1902), *On the Thames*, c. 1876, 74.8 x 110 cm, The Hepworth Wakefield

James Tissot (1836-1902), *On the Thames*, c. 1876, 74.8 x 110 cm, The Hepworth Wakefield

- **James Tissot shocked many critics when he exhibited this painting at the Royal Academy in 1876.** The morals of the characters were questionable which was made worse by the lavish supply of alcohol and the questionable location with its filthy chimneys and polluted waters. The ladies were described as 'vulgar' and 'low-bred' and the lounging bodies suggest too great a degree of familiarity and suggest to clearly what might follow.

### **NOTES**

- James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836–1902) was a French painter and illustrator. He was a successful painter of Paris society before moving to London in 1871 (aged 35).
- Tissot fought in the Franco-Prussian War as part of the improvised defence of Paris, joining two companies of the Garde Nationale and later as part Paris Commune. Either because of the political associations caused by the latter (which he was believed to have

joined to protect his own belongings), or simply because of better opportunities, he left Paris for London in 1871. Having already worked as a caricaturist for Thomas Gibson Bowles, the owner of the magazine *Vanity Fair*, as well as exhibited at the Royal Academy, Tissot arrived with established social and artistic connections in London. Bowles gave Tissot both a place to stay as well as a cartooning job for *Vanity Fair*.

- He quickly developed his reputation as a painter of elegantly dressed women shown in scenes of fashionable life. By 1872, Tissot was able to purchase his own home in St John's Wood, an area of London very popular with artists at the time. According to *The Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists*, 'in 1874 Edmond de Goncourt wrote sarcastically that he had 'a studio with a waiting room where, at all times, there is iced champagne at the disposal of visitors'.

### **NOTES FROM TATE BOOKLET**

Room 6: "Through Outsiders' Eyes: Fogs, The Thames, and Westminster

- The Thames and its atmospheric effects were key themes that were to occupy the artists included in this exhibition. Daubigny and Monet had already risen to the challenge of painting fog on the river during their exile and Monet criticised Victorian painters for painting London 'brick by brick... bricks they didn't see, bricks they could not see. It's the fog that gives London its marvellous breadth'. But it was left to another foreign painter, Whistler, to pursue this endeavour, and to be credited by Oscar Wilde with 'the invention of fogs'.
- This room considers the novelty with which outsiders tackled the Thames and the challenge of its fog, and how, in their work, the Palace of Westminster gradually emerged as a trope through which they competed with each other. It concludes with

Pissarro's first painting of central London and the river with Westminster in the centre, executed at a time when he knew that Monet was planning to paint a series on the Thames, the subject of the next room. Some of Pissarro's children had settled in London and he considered a permanent move here himself."

#### **REFERENCES**

<https://hepworthwakefield.org/our-art-artists/collections/highlights/james-tissot/>



James Tissot (1836-1902), *Portsmouth Dockyard*, 1877, Tate Britain

James Tissot (1836-1902), *Portsmouth Dockyard*, 1877, Tate Britain

- **The following year Tissot exhibited this revised and perfectly acceptable painting of a traditional story of a man trying to choose between two women.** It looks as if the man has just made his choice as he turns to speak to the woman with a look of victory on her face. The other woman has a sullen look and her parasol isolates her. It is a respectable location, Portsmouth Docks and some healthy sailors are just rowing into view.
- Interestingly in today's world this painting is less acceptable than the previous one. The Victorian's moral certainties about the world started to be eroded in the last decades of the nineteenth century when fears and uncertainties arose from scientific findings and a general foreboding that the good times could not last forever. There was a feeling that like the Roman Empire the British Empire would fall but with no clear idea of the cause. Many thought it would collapse through its own internal decadence and degeneration. In 1892 **Max Nordau published *Degeneration*** and it became very popular (seven editions in six months) as it seemed to explain what

many saw as the social decline and imperial failures such as the recent Boer War (1880-81).

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James Abbott McNeill  
Whistler (1834–1903),  
*Wapping on Thames*,  
1860-4, 72 × 101.8 cm,  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington

James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), *Wapping on Thames*, 1860-4, 72 × 101.8 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington

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<https://www.jameswhistler.org/wapping/>



Alfred Sisley (1839-1899), *The Thames at Hampton Court*, 1874, 38.1 x 55.2 cm, The Clark Art Institute, Massachusetts



Alfred Sisley (1839-1899), *The Thames at Hampton Court*, 1874, 38.1 x 55.2 cm, The Clark Art Institute, Massachusetts

- In **1874 Sisley exhibited at the first Impressionist exhibition** and later the same year he visited London and painted a **dozen works around Hampton Court**.
- This shows an idyllic sunny day with yachts on the river and **Hampton Court in the distance**. The building on the right is The Pavilion at the end of Pavilion Terrace. The Pavilion is Grade II listed and is the sole survivor of four pavilions for the Bowling Green at Hampton Court. It was designed by William Talman under the direction of Christopher Wren. The building was sold in 2012 for £10 million and a replica house was built next to it in 2019.

## **REFERENCES**

<https://www.clarkart.edu/artpiece/detail/the-thames-at-hampton-court>

Claude  
Monet, *The  
Thames below  
Westminster*,  
about 1871,  
National  
Gallery



Claude Monet, *The Thames below Westminster*, about 1871, National Gallery

- One of the most famous images of the Thames by Claude Monet.
- "Monet was captivated by London's fog during his first stay in the capital from 1870 to 1871. Later in life he told the art dealer Rene Gimpel: **'Without the fog, London would not be a beautiful city. It's the fog that gives it its magnificent breadth.'** This misty composition is anchored by carefully positioned horizontal and vertical structures – the jetty in the foreground, Westminster Bridge marking the horizon, and the Houses of Parliament.
- **Every architectural element in the picture was new at the time.** The Houses of Parliament had only just been finished, as had the Victoria Embankment on the right. St Thomas' Hospital, the low rectangular shape on the far left, was also nearing completion before opening in the summer of 1871, and Westminster Bridge had been reconstructed in 1862. However, Monet is more interested here in broad effects than architectural detail; indeed he has exaggerated the height of the towers of the Houses of Parliament,

making the building seem like a **fairy tale palace.**". [1]

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[1] <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/claude-monet-the-thames-below-westminster>



John Atkinson Grimshaw (1836–1893), *Reflections on the Thames, Westminster*, 1880, 76.2 × 127 cm, Leeds Art Gallery

John Atkinson Grimshaw (1836–1893), *Reflections on the Thames, Westminster*, 1880, 76.2 × 127 cm, Leeds Art Gallery

- The Thames from a similar location by the British artist John Atkinson Grimshaw. He was known for his **nocturnal scenes** which were very popular with the public. His **love of photography** led to a desire to represent the scenes realistically. He was **self-taught** and would **use a camera obscura** to throw an image onto his canvas, a technique believed to have been used by Caravaggio and Vermeer.
- Whistler, who Grimshaw worked with in his Chelsea studios, stated, "**I considered myself the inventor of nocturnes until I saw Grimmy's moonlit pictures**".
- He was born in Leeds and at the age of 24, without any formal training and to the dismay of his parents, he left his job as a clerk to become an artist. He became successful enough in his 30s to rent a second home in Scarborough. Four of his children became painters.

## NOTES

- "He was born on 6 September 1836 in a back-to-back in Park Street,

Leeds to Mary and David Grimshaw. In 1856 he married his cousin Frances Hubbard (1835–1917). In 1861, at the age of 24, to the dismay of his parents, he left his job as a clerk for the Great Northern Railway to become a painter. He first exhibited in 1862, mostly paintings of birds, fruit, and blossom, under the patronage of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society. He and his wife moved in 1866 to a semi-detached villa, which is now numbered 56 Cliff Road in Headingley and has a Leeds Civic Trust blue plaque, and in 1870 to Knostrop Old Hall. He became successful in the 1870s and rented a second home, Castle-by-the-Sea in Scarborough, Scarborough became a favourite subject. He died on 13 October 1893 of tuberculosis and is buried in Woodhouse Cemetery, now called St George's Fields, in Leeds. Four of his children, Arthur E. Grimshaw (1864–1913), Louis H. Grimshaw (1870–1944), Wilfred Grimshaw (1871–1937), and Elaine Grimshaw (1877–1970) also became painters."

## **REFERENCES**

<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2021/master-paintings-part-ii/southwark-bridge-by-moonlight>

[1] <https://artvee.com/dl/southwark-bridge-by-moonlight/>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Atkinson\\_Grimshaw](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Atkinson_Grimshaw)



John Atkinson Grimshaw (1836–1893), *Southwark Bridge by Moonlight*, 1887, 35.2 by 45 cm, private collector

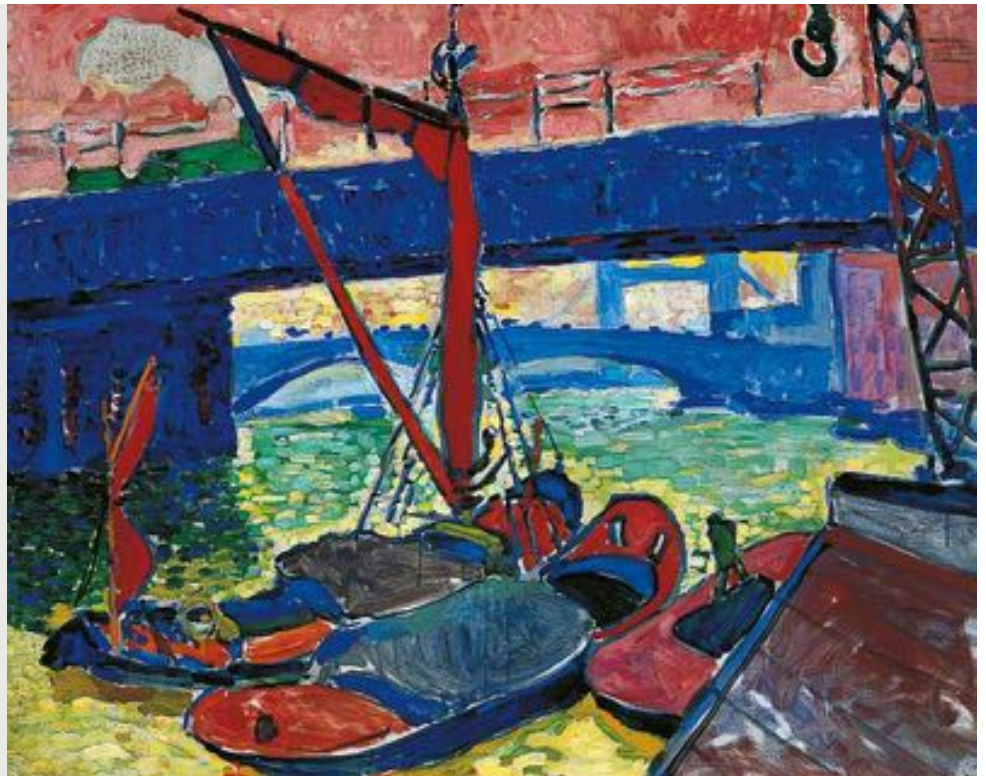


John Atkinson Grimshaw (1836–1893), *Southwark Bridge by Moonlight*, 1887, 35.2 by 45 cm, private collector, Dallas, sold at Sotheby's for \$176,400

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<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2021/master-paintings-part-ii/southwark-bridge-by-moonlight>

André Derain (1880–1954), *Barges on the Thames*, 1906



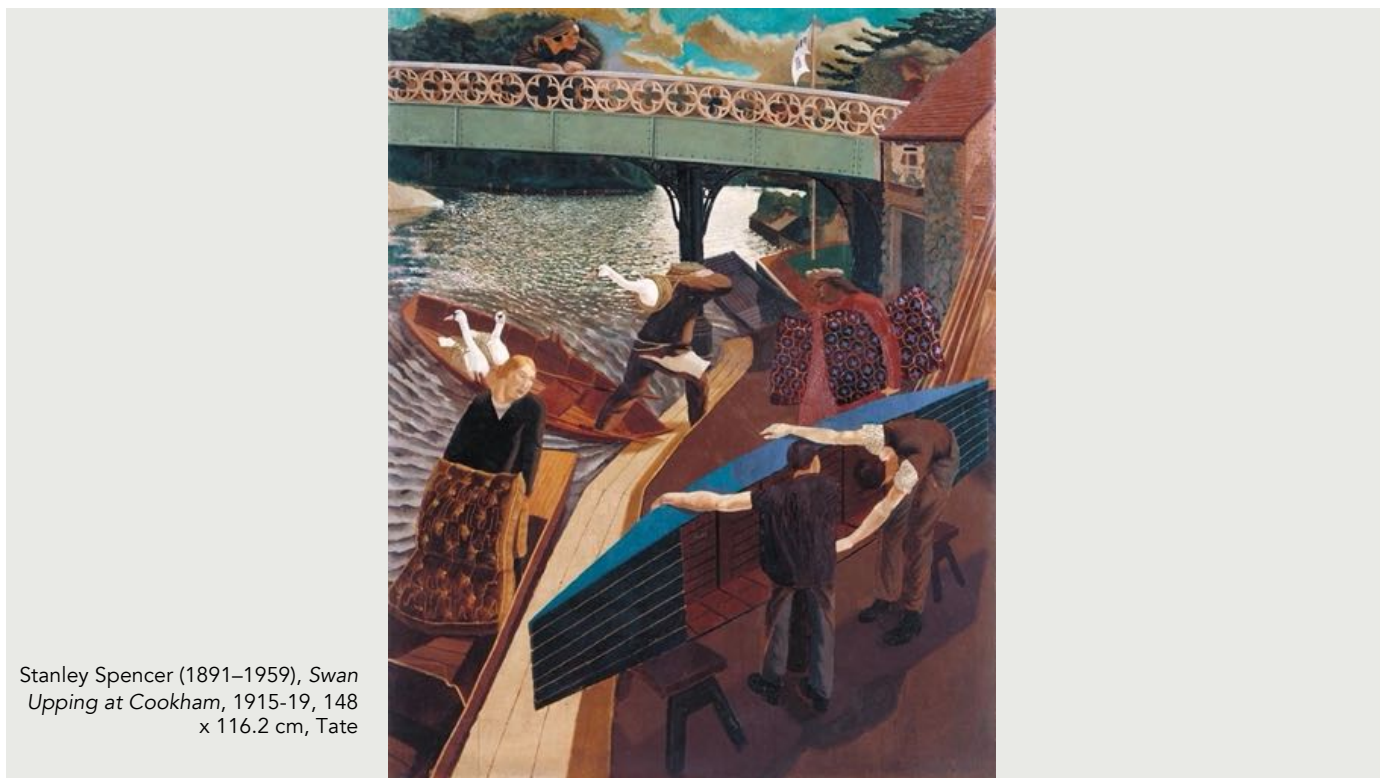
André Derain (1880–1954), *Barges on the Thames*, 1906, 81.3 × 99 cm, Leeds Art Gallery

- Art was changing rapidly at the beginning of the twentieth-century. This is *Barges on the Thames* by Andre Derain.
- He was one of the leaders of the **Fauvist movement** alongside Henri Matisse and Maurice de Vlaminck but his reputation was destroyed when he went on a sponsored tour of Germany during the Second World War. After the war was denounced by Picasso and ostracised. A few years later he contracted an eye infection and in 1954 he was killed in a road accident. Before he died he was asked if there was anything he wanted and his last words were '**A bicycle and a piece of sky**'.

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Stanley Spencer (1891–1959), *Swan Upping at Cookham*, 1915-19, 148 x 116.2 cm, Tate

- We have jumped out to Cookham as I wanted to include a work by Stanley Spencer. This is an interesting work as it was started in 1915 and it was left unfinished in his bedroom at home while he served abroad.
- Throughout the war Spencer thought he would die and his main regret was that he would not be able to return to his little bedroom in Cookham to finish this picture. As an infantry man every assignment he was given was more dangerous than the last. He said you can imagine what he felt when at long last he entered his bedroom and saw this half-finished picture turned towards the wall of his bedroom. He went over to the painting and turned it round so they were at long last looking at each other again, **'it seemed unbelievable but it was a fact'**.
- Swan upping was an annual ceremony held at the end of July between London and Henley. It is undertaken by the Royal Swanherd and the Swan Wardens of the Dyers' and Vintners'

Companies in the City. Young swans are caught and marked in the same way as their parents, with one nick in their beak to mean the bird is owned by the Dyers and two nicks for the Vintners. The Queen's swans are not marked and all unmarked swans on the Thames are hers by right.

## **NOTES**

- Spencer had begun the painting by making a small oil study and several drawings from memory before visiting Turks Boatyard beside Cookham Bridge to confirm his composition. Spencer worked systematically from top to bottom on the canvas but had only completed the top two-thirds of the picture when he had to leave it in 1915. Returning to the work Spencer found it difficult to continue after his war-time experiences, often stating "It is not proper or sensible to expect to paint after such experience." It was exhibited at the new English Art Club in 1920 and bought by J. L. Behrend.

## **BIO:SPENCER**

- **Spencer's Early Life, 1891 to 1914**
- 1891, A crow fell down the chimney at Fernlea on Cookham High Street, flapped around the room, flew out of the window and Stanley Spencer was born. The date was June 30th 1891 - and the family thought it was a good omen. He was the eighth surviving child of Annie and William Spencer, a piano teacher, and he was joined a year later by his younger brother Gilbert. This is a picture of the house today and this is how the High Street looked in the 1880s. The Kings Arms Hotel is four houses away from Fernlea.
- 1891-1907, his father did not think the local school was satisfactory and could not afford a private school so Spencer was educated by his sisters Annie and Florence in the shed at the bottom of the garden next door but as Spencer did not like

school work so they allowed him to draw instead. Painting was not an important subject for the Spencer family but there were a number of reproductions on the walls and when he was old enough his mother took him to the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy.

- 1907, Spencer was stimulated by reading from the family bible and enjoyed taking long, solitary walks. He spent time drawing with the wife of a local landowner, Lady Boston who, in 1907, arranged for him to go to Maidenhead Technical Institute.
- 1908-12 he studied at the Slade under Henry Tonks. Contemporaries included Christopher Nevinson, David Bomberg, and Paul Nash. 1912 he exhibited John Donne Arriving in Heaven at Roger Fry's Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition. He was considered to be influenced by Gauguin. However, he was more influenced by Giotto and Mantegna and when asked what he thought of Picasso he said 'I haven't got past Piero della Francesca yet'. Paul Nash called him 'the last of the Pre-Raphaelites'.
- **World War One, 1914 to 1918**
- 1915-18 he attended the Slade School of Art between 1908 and 1912 and so his career started at the same time as the First World War. During the war his poor physique caused him to apply for ambulance duties. He enlisted in the Royal Army Medical Corp and was sent to Bristol and later Macedonia. He requested a transfer to the infantry in 1917.
- 1918, he returned to Cookham in December 1918 to hear his brother Sydney had been killed in action three months previously and he lost 'the all pervading joy I felt as a child' and the 'serenity of spirit'. His much loved brother had been killed in the last few weeks of the war and returning to the work after the war he found it difficult to continue, often stating "It is not proper or

sensible to expect to paint after such experience.” Many artists felt the same and although in Europe some artists reacted against the slaughter by rejecting all social, cultural and artistic standards in Britain and among many artists in Europe there was what has been called a “return to order”. The excesses of modernism we rejected and there was a return to more conventional figurative painting. Cubism was partially abandoned even by its creators, Braque and Picasso, and Futurism, which had praised machinery, violence and war, was rejected by most of its adherents. The return to order was associated with a revival of classicism and realistic painting.

- **1920 to 1927, The Resurrection, Cookham**

- 1919 lived and worked at Cookham. He became a member New English Art Club until 1927.
- 1920-21 he lodged with Henry Slessor and his wife at Bourne End near Cookham.
- 1922 he accompanied the Carline family on a holiday to Yugoslavia, became engaged to Hilda Carline and moved to Hampstead.
- 1925 married Anne Hilda Carline and had two daughters Shirin (1925) and Unity (1930). When he first met Hilda he became a changed man in his own words the old Stanley Spencer ‘was now no longer so’ and the new ‘lust or what you will was sweeping me along’.
- 1926 completed The Resurrection, one of his ‘major, most memorable achievements’. The Times critic would call it ‘the most important picture painted by any English artist during the present century ... What makes it so astonishing is the combination in it of careful detail with modern freedom in the treatment of form. It is as if a Pre-Raphaelite had shaken hands with a Cubist.’

- **The Sandham Memorial Chapel. Burghclere, 1926-32 (National Trust)**
- 1927 Spencer received commissions including the Sandham Memorial Chapel (1927-1932). It was in 1927 that he held his first one-man exhibition at the Goupil Gallery. The centre piece of the exhibition was The Resurrection, Cookham.
- **Cookham, 1932-1935, The Church House Project**
- 1932 moved to 'Lindworth', a large house in Cookham. Began work on 'Church-House' idea. Elected an Associate of the Royal Academy. Dudley Tooth became his sole agent.
- **Divorce and Remarriage, 1935-1938**
- 1935 resigned from the Royal Academy after the rejection of The Dustman and other works from the Summer Exhibition and the controversy resulted in his popularity declining.
- 1937 he was divorced by his wife Hilda Carline and immediately married Patricia Preece. His second marriage was a disaster, never consummated and his wife manipulated and exploited him. Spencer tried to win back Hilda but never succeeded. He began work on the Beatitudes of Love series.
- 1938 in financial difficulties, left Cookham and went to stay with the Rothensteins in London. Dudley Tooth took over managing his business affairs. Began Christ in the Wilderness series in bed-sit in Swiss Cottage.
- **Port Glasgow, World War Two, 1935-1945**
- 1939-41 stayed at the White Hart Inn, Leonard Stanley, Gloucestershire, with George and Daphne Charlton. In March 1940 the War Artists Advisory Committee commissioned Spencer to paint the Port Glasgow shipyards, which occupied him until 1946. Went to live in Epsom with his children and then moved back to Cookham.
- **Resurrection Pictures, 1945-1950**

- 1945 began The Resurrection, Port Glasgow series (1945-1950). His reputation improved as a result of his war commissions
- 1950 Alfred Munnings, the President of the Royal Academy, initiated a prosecution against Spencer for obscenity but Munnings then resigned and the new President persuaded Spencer to re-join the RA. Hilda died of breast cancer in November. This followed years of mental health problems during which Spencer visited her weekly and sent long letters, some of over one hundred pages. He continued to send letters after her death.
- **Final Years, 1951 to 1959**
- 1954 he visited China as a guest of the Chinese authorities.
- 1955 there was a retrospective exhibition at the Tate Gallery.
- 1959 knighted. Died of bowel cancer on 14 December aged 58 at the Canadian War Memorial Hospital, Cliveden, Berkshire. His last years until his death in 1959 were financially successful although his reputation and his sale prices did not soar until after his death.

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William Roberts (1895-1980), *The Port of London*, c.1920–4, 53.3 (x) 74.8 cm, Tate

- Back to the Port of London. William Roberts was one of those artists who reacted against abstract art after World War One. This became a movement across Europe known as the 'Return to Order'. This painting marks his transition away from a radical abstraction to a form of simplified naturalism.
- "In the years before the First World War **Roberts was a pioneer**, among English artists, in his use of **abstract images**. In later years he described his approach as that of an "**English Cubist**". In the First World War he served as a gunner on the Western Front, and in 1918 became an official war artist. Roberts's first one-man show was at the Chenil Gallery in London in 1923, and a number of his paintings from the twenties were purchased by the Contemporary Art Society for provincial galleries in the UK. In the 1930s it could be argued that Roberts was artistically at the top of his game; but, **although his work was exhibited regularly** in London and, increasingly, internationally, **he always struggled financially**. This



situation became worse during the Second World War – although Roberts did carry out some commissions as a war artist. Roberts is probably best remembered for the large, complex and colourful compositions that he exhibited annually at the Royal Academy summer exhibition from the 1950s until his death. He had a major retrospective at the Tate Gallery in 1965, and was elected a full member of the Royal Academy in 1966. There has **recently been a revival of interest** in the work of this artist who always worked outside the mainstream.".[1]

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Christopher Richard Wynne  
Nevinson (1889-  
1946), *Blackfriars Bridge*,  
London, 1927



Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson (1889-1946), *Blackfriars Bridge*, London, 1927, 76.3 × 101.6 cm, The Courtauld

- "Nevinson takes a vantage point at the junction of **Blackfriars Bridge and the Embankment** to create this dramatic **v-shaped composition**, looking along the Thames to old Waterloo Bridge. He captures the frenetic activity of the city in its various aspects, from the bustle of commuters on foot and in trams, to the heavy river traffic and the smoking chimneys of the industrial docks along the South Bank. Visible through the smog in the upper left are the towers of the Palace of Westminster." . [1]
- Nevinson trained at the **Slade** and became **one of the most famous war artists during World War One**. After the war he travelled to America but his **boasting and exaggerated claims** of his war experiences together with his **temperamental personality made him many enemies** in the US and Britain. A critic wrote "**It is something, at the age of thirty one, to be among the most discussed, most successful, most promising, most admired and most hated British artists**".

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Julia Fullerton-Batten (b. 1970), Digital reconstruction of the 1928 flood

- Julia Fullerton-Batten produced a series called **"Old Father Thames "...choosing, investigating and photographing a selection of cultural and historical narratives from along its banks."**
- **In 1928 there was a disastrous flood.** Fourteen people died and thousands were made homeless when the Thames poured over the top of the Embankment. It was caused by heavy snow in the Cotswolds followed by a sudden thaw and heavy rain coinciding with a high spring tide and a storm surge. It was made worse by deep dredging to allow bigger ships to enter the Port of London but with the side effect that it increased the flow of the incoming tide. **It led 35 years later to the building of the Thames Barrier.**
- This is a **digital reconstruction of the effect on the Tate** when the painting had to be removed from the gallery. The gallery was flooded almost to the tops of the doors on the ground floor (a depth of between five and eight feet 1.5 to 2.4 m), which caused damage to many paintings in the gallery's collections, most notably those of

J M W Turner. Eighteen paintings were damaged beyond repair.

- Millbank's general appearance today dates from the 1930s, when the area was extensively rebuilt to repair damage caused by the 1928 Thames flood disaster, following the collapse of a 25-metre-long section of the Thames Embankment.

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Victor Pasmore, *The Quiet River: The Thames at Chiswick*, 1943–4



Victor Pasmore, *The Quiet River: The Thames at Chiswick*, 1943–4, 76.2 × 101.6 cm, Tate

- "In the mid-1940s Pasmore painted a series of **views of the Thames at Chiswick**. In doing so he was following a tradition which goes back to nineteenth century painters, including Turner and Whistler. Pasmore was aware of these precedents when he worked on the series and, like those artists, concentrated on the subtle light variations and the atmosphere of the scene. The timeless romanticism of the diffused light and the horse and cart belie the reality of the place, which was then an industrial area: the dark form on the right is the roof of an especially odorous vitamin factory." (Tate caption)

## NOTES

- The Pasmores lived in this area that borders Chiswick and Hammersmith in 1943. The area has long been associated with artists who lived there and painted the area. This view of Chiswick Eyot is from a point east of Weltje Road, where I used to live in

1972. It is not a photographic representation, for example, the breakwater that runs horizontally across the painting was introduced for its pictorial effect.

- Pasmore started as a figurative painter, one of the most talented of his generation. In the 1930s he briefly experimented with abstract painting but was dissatisfied. From 1947 he pioneered abstract art in Britain and was interested in the way in which abstract art simply represents itself.
- In 1945 Pasmore stated that '**All nature is a harmony of opposites and art, therefore, a matter of question and answer. Dark is answered by light, red by green, the straight line by the curved line, the solid by the liquid ... symmetry by variety ... By combining one with the other and setting one off against the other harmony is obtained**'.
- After the Second World War Pasmore taught at **Camberwell School of Art** and in 1951 he contributed to the Festival of Britain. In the late 1950s the art course he developed while **teaching at Durham became the basis for higher art education across the UK**. He later began to combine sculpture and architecture and he represented Britain at the **1961 Venice Biennale**. He is little known internationally as he is difficult to pigeonhole into a single role or style. There is a consistency in his figurative and abstract art based on geometry and the golden mean.
- When Pasmore looked back on his career he said that he felt he had witnessed the 'revolution of Painting ... (when) the naturalist painter has been forced to start completely again'. The art historian **Herbert Read described his abstract art as 'The most revolutionary event in post-war British art'**.

### **BIO:PASMORE**

- •Edwin John Victor Pasmore (1908-1998) was a British artist and



architect who pioneered abstract art in Britain in the 1940s and 50s. He was born in Surrey and with the death of his father when he was 19 he was forced to take an administrative job while he studied art part-time. He painted in a figurative manner in the style of Turner and Whistler and he was one of the most talented figurative painters of his generation. In the 1930s, he helped found the Euston Road School which emphasized working directly from nature and he was inspired by the work of Walter Sickert. In the Second World War, he was a conscientious objector. He was initially refused and was called up but refused to obey orders and was court martialled and imprisoned. This enabled him to appeal and he was then exempt from military duty. From 1943-49 he taught at Camberwell School of Art and he promoted abstract art. From 1947 he pioneered abstract art in Britain and he brought about a revival of interest in Constructivism. He was influenced by Ben Nicholson and Herbert Read described his new style as 'The most revolutionary event in post-war British art'. In 1950 he was commissioned to design a mural for a bus depot in Kingston-upon-Thames and in 1951 he contributed a mural to the Festival of Britain. From 1954-61 he developed an art course at Durham inspired by the basic course of the Bauhaus. He began to synthesize sculpture and architecture and his 'Apollo Pavilion' in Peterlee, County Durham proved controversial. He represented Britain at the 1961 Venice Biennale and became a trustee of the Tate

- In 1954 he explained that he worked in relief because abstract works stress their own status as objects whereas representational works refer to other objects. In 1961, Pasmore added, 'Whereas in representational art the spectator is confined to a point which is always at a distance from the object, in abstract form he must handle, feel, move around and get into the work if he is to fully apprehend the intentions of the artist.'
- In the 1950s and 60s his

work was often assembled rather than moulded or carved which broke with the tradition established by Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth.

- In 1945 Pasmore stated that '**All nature is a harmony of opposites and art, therefore, a matter of question and answer. Dark is answered by light, red by green, the straight line by the curved line, the solid by the liquid ... symmetry by variety ... By combining one with the other and setting one off against the other harmony is obtained**'.

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Mark Dion (b. 1961), *Tate Thames Dig*, 1999, wooden cabinet, porcelain, earthenware, metal, animal bones, glass, 27 prints and 2 maps, 266 × 370 × 126 cm, Tate

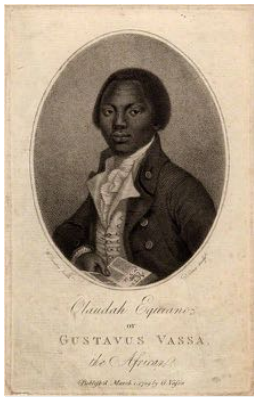
Mark Dion (b. 1961), *Tate Thames Dig*, 1999, wooden cabinet, porcelain, earthenware, metal, animal bones, glass, 27 prints and 2 maps, 266 × 370 × 126 cm, Tate

- The glass cabinet in the style of a **Victorian display cabinet** contains items **found in the Thames** outside Tate Britain and Tate Modern. The items are not labelled so that the viewer can construct their own story around them.
- "Working over a number of days, Dion's team collected large quantities of items, including **clay pipes, vividly decorated shards of delftware, oyster shells and plastic toys**. The finds were then meticulously **cleaned and classified** in 'archaeologists' tents' on the Tate Gallery's lawn at Millbank during the summer of 1999".
- **London's growth and fortunes can be attributed to the Thames and Mark Dion took the river as a source of artefacts around which the story of the river and the city could be constructed.** He intentionally avoids a linear historical narrative and places antique objects alongside modern rubbish. He presents the history of each site as a tangled web of references, ancient and modern **just as a**

walk through London juxtaposes a Roman wall alongside a Wren church and a modern advertising poster.

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Equiano by [Daniel Orme](#), frontispiece of his autobiography (1789)

Kerry James Marshall (b.1955), *Untitled (London Bridge)*, 2017, 213.7 × 303.7 cm, Tate



Kerry James Marshall (b.1955), *Untitled (London Bridge)*, 2017, 213.7 × 303.7 cm, Tate

- **London Bridge was the first to span the Thames at London and so I end with it but not in London.**
- Old London Bridge (1209-1831) with houses on it had suffered damage and had been repaired many times over its 600 year life. In 1831 New London Bridge was opened 100 feet upstream. In 1896 was found to be slowly sinking (an inch every eight years) and eventually in **1968** the London Council **placed the bridge on the market and sold it for about \$2.5 million** and 10,000 tons of granite blocks were shipped to California and trucked to Long Beach Arizona. The bridge now spans an artificial waterway in Lake Havasu City.
- "**American painter Marshall depicts a fictitious scene set at London Bridge in Lake Havasu, Arizona.** Originally spanning the River Thames, in 1967 the bridge was **rebuilt in America**. In the centre of the painting, a man wears a **sandwich board advertising a restaurant called Olaudah's. Olaudah Equiano**, born in West Africa

around 1745 and **sold into slavery**, bought his freedom in 1767. He **moved to London**, where he became a prominent figure in the **abolitionist movement**. The two stories of displacement connect to financial opportunity: **Equiano became a successful businessman**, and Lake Havasu is now a tourist destination." [1]

- Marshall is one of those artists who is reinvigorating narrative painting which went out of fashion. He uses it to reimagine Black heroes and here he also tells a story of dislocation, of Black slaves and of London Bridge. Every year at Lake Havasu there is a ballooning event which we can see here. Above the Black man is a rope but Marshall leaves it ambiguous as to whether it is a reminder of slave having or simply a balloon's tether. The Black man with the sandwich board is being ignored but does this represent the ignoring of racism or is it simply that sandwich board operators are always ignored? Marshall leaves these questions open in his painting.

## NOTES

- "Olaudah Equiano (c.1745–1797), known for most of his life as Gustavus Vassa was a writer and abolitionist from, according to his memoir, the Eboe (Igbo) region of the Kingdom of Benin (today southern Nigeria). Enslaved as a child in Africa, he was taken to the Caribbean and sold as a slave to a Royal Navy officer. He was sold twice more but purchased his freedom in 1766." [2]
- Kerry James Marshall is an American artist and professor, known for his paintings of Black figures. He previously taught painting at the School of Art and Design at the University of Illinois at Chicago. In 2017, Marshall was included on the annual Time 100 list of the most influential people in the world.
- The current London Bridge was built from 1967 to 1972 at a cost of £4 million.

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerry\\_James\\_Marshall](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerry_James_Marshall)





# THE THAMES IN ART

DR. LAURENCE SHAFE  
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- I hope you enjoyed our brief journey down the Thames and through time. That ends today's talk and I look forward to seeing you all again next week.
- Goodbye for now.



# A STROKE OF GENIUS

SEPTEMBER 28TH 2022- FEBRUARY 22ND 2023

1. Art at the Seaside

The Thames in Art

**Angelica Kauffman**

Gwen John

Augustus John

Can You Spot a Fake?

Vermeer's Complete Works (Part 1)

Vermeer's Complete Works (Part 2)

9. The World's Most Expensive Art

10. Charles Rennie Macintosh

11. Venice - City of Water

12. Edward Hopper

13. The 12 Greatest Art Forgers (Part 1)

14. The 12 Greatest Art Forgers (Part 2)

15. Mary Moser

16. Leonardo da Vinci

- Just a brief reminder of what's to come. Next week is a little known woman artist, Angelica Kauffman. But at the end of the eighteenth century newspapers reported that "the world is Angelicamad". We shall find out why next week.